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**CULTURE AND EMPIRE:
RUDYARD KIPLING'S INDIAN FICTION**

**A
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**Presented to the Faculty
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks**

**in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

By

©1996 Eric John Grekowicz, B.A.

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RUDYARD KIPLING'S INDIAN FICTION

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ABSTRACT

A survey of Rudyard Kipling's Indian fiction indicates that his writings reflect a deeply-felt ambivalence toward the imperial projects of his contemporaries. Kipling condemns British characters who denigrate Indians or India, and in doing so, he subverts the Victorian notion of Britain's innate superiority. Kipling's early fiction reveals the author's respect for Eastern culture and religion. His India represents a utopic vision of cultural mixing. An anthropological perspective on these stories shows that the Indian fiction is designed to create cross-cultural communication. Kipling illustrates how failure to understand India ultimately destroys the British, and by attacking many of the injustices of imperialism, he fosters an atmosphere conducive to the synthesis of cultures. Kipling's ultimate enterprise is to promote tolerance of difference through understanding and respect of the other.

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Abbreviations and Contents of Texts

- (PT) *Plain Tales from the Hills*. Oxford UP, 1987
- (DW) *The Day's Work*. Oxford UP, 1987
- (LH) *Life's Handicap*. Oxford UP, 1987
- (WWW) *Wee Willie Winkie*, contains *Under the Deodars*, *The Phantom Rickshaw and Other Tales*, and *Wee Willie Winkie and Other Stories*. Penguin, 1988
- (Klm) *Kim*. Oxford UP, 1987
- (ST) *Soldiers Three and In Black and White*, contains *Soldiers Three and In Black and White*. Penguin, 1993
- (JB) *The Jungle Books*, contains *The Jungle Book* and *The Second Jungle Book*. Oxford UP, 1987
- (SM) *Something of Myself*. Cambridge UP, 1991

INTRODUCTION

For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!
[“Recessional” 1897]

In the 1941 introduction to his *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, T. S. Eliot explained that “the critical tools which we are accustomed to use in analysing and criticising [literature] do not seem to work [with Kipling]; I confess furthermore that introspection into my own processes affords no assistance” (17). Eliot understood that there was a reason for Kipling’s continued and unceasing popularity even if he himself could not isolate it. Kipling has a quality to which the non-academic reading public instinctively responded and still does. Also, fellow artists, including Samuel Clemens, Henry James, Ernest Hemingway, Joseph Conrad, and T. S. Eliot, were deeply influenced by Kipling’s work. Very little of Kipling’s writing has ever been out of print, and many of his stories have always remained wildly popular.

In 1976, Paul Beam lamented that critics friendly to Kipling traditionally employ models which hostile critics have created. He explained that this reliance on anti-Kipling writers demonstrates that despite Kipling’s skill as a writer, he “still languishes under

social stigmas that were never warranted and are outmoded in the present" (182). However, the trend in Kipling studies since around 1980 has been to downplay, or even ignore, criticism hostile to Kipling because it seldom examined the author's works closely. Ann Parry, an outspoken Kipling advocate, boldly declared in her 1986 article on "The Bridge-Builders" that she would no longer apologize for her devotion to either Kipling or the Society named after him.

In his study of fiction about India, Ralph Crane follows Parry's lead and, avoiding defensiveness, begins with the assumption that Kipling was not only a great writer but also a prophet (10). Hans-Peter Breuer also finds that Kipling's fiction predicts modern-day India. He explains that the conscious integration of Eastern and Western cultures by Indians created the liberal and technologically advanced nation of today. Kipling's writings, in Breuer's reading, continually describe the process by which India will enter the twenty-first century. William Blackburn of Canada and K. C. Belliappa of India completely reject the assumptions of post-WWI Kipling criticism. They explain that much of it is politically motivated and not particularly interested in Kipling's art.

George Orwell's essay "Rudyard Kipling" is fairly representative of the hostile criticism against which these other analysts rebel. Orwell not only declared that Kipling personified racism and mercantile imperialism but also derided Eliot for defending him as an author. In the famous attack, Orwell states:

[Eliot] falls into the . . . error of defending [Kipling] where he is not defensible. It is no use pretending that Kipling's view of life, as a whole, can be accepted or even forgiven by any civilised person. It is no use claiming, for instance, that when Kipling describes a British soldier beating a "nigger" with a cleaning rod in order to get money out of him, he is acting merely as a reporter and does not necessarily approve what he describes. There is not the slightest sign anywhere in Kipling's work that he disapproves of that kind of conduct--on the contrary, there is a definite strain of sadism in him, over and above the brutality which a writer of that type has to have. Kipling *is* a jingo imperialist, he *is* morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting. (74-5)

In this essay, Orwell does not analyze the author he so bitterly denounces. Instead, he declares such generalities as he is a "forcible evangelist" (77); Kipling is a "poor artist" because he uses cockney accents in his work (79); and he sold out to the British ruling class (88). In Orwell's critique, Kipling's use of dialect meets with snobbery; anything cockney cannot be art. Orwell uniformly treats the ideas contained in Kipling's writings as rabid imperialism motivated by racism. He sees Kipling's treatment of religion as destroying Indian belief systems. However, dialect is not inherently inartistic, and stories like "Lispeth" and *Kim* celebrate Indian religions. Equally important is the fact that Kipling's sympathetic

treatment of Indian peoples and his correspondingly negative treatment of bigoted Englishmen in *Something of Myself*, *The Day's Work* or *Life's Handicap*, debunks racism.

While Orwell starts his discussion of Kipling with false assumptions about the other writer, the charge that Kipling likes "beating niggers" is a serious one. Orwell takes this image from a poem called "Loot." The actual wording of these lines is "An' if you treat a nigger to a dose o' cleanin'-rod / 'E's like to show you everything 'e owns" (36-37). Certainly, this is a horrific statement. However, Orwell neglects to inform his readers that "Loot" begins by stating that only thieves can understand the nature of imperialism:

If you've ever stole a pheasant-egg be'ind the keeper's
back,
If you've ever snigged the washin' from the line,
If you've ever crammed a gander in you bloomin'
'aversack,

You will understand this little song o' mine. (1-4)

Orwell mistakes the intent of the poem. Far from being a sadistic and gleeful description of brutal and racist behavior, "Loot" unequivocally condemns such conduct. It is surprising that Orwell could equate the speaker of "Loot" with the author. This poem, which Orwell uses to "beat" Kipling, praises racism and imperialism less than Randall Jarrell's "Death of the Ball-Turret Gunner" can be said to glorify war. What Orwell unintentionally illustrates are the dangers of taking lines out of context.

Attacks on Kipling by Orwell and critics with similar ideas stem from a fundamental incompatibility of their world-views. Kipling consistently and conscientiously undermines British authority. Orwell himself expresses his concern about this tendency in Kipling: "few people who have criticised England from the inside have said bitterer things about her than this gutter patriot" (79). Indeed, Kipling often attacks the very structure of British society. For example, he often contemptuously refers to Queen Victoria as "the Widow at Windsor" and, by lambasting her, denigrates Britain because the monarch symbolizes the country. In the poem, "The Widow at Windsor," Kipling blasts the queen because imperial policies force young men to throw away their lives to maintain her vanity as Empress. The speaker of "The Widow at Windsor" advises the reader to "Walk wide 'o the Widow at Windsor, / For 'alf o' Creation she owns: / [and] We [the conscripts] 'ave bought 'er the same . . . with our bones" (16-19). Similarly, Kipling attacks the queen in "The Widow's Party" and "Shillin' a Day." The speakers of these poems hold Victoria personally responsible for the agony which British imperialism, euphemistically referred to as "her party," causes.

What upset Orwell was not that Kipling was wronging other cultures; the most disturbing aspect of Kipling's work was that it attacked British culture while castigating imperialism. While he probably would have agreed with Kipling had the critique of imperialism come in a different form, Orwell did not like what Kipling

had to say about England. G. K. Chesterton admits what few other Kipling critics allowed themselves to say when he declares, "I am not concerned with Mr. Rudyard Kipling as a vivid artist or a vigorous personality; I am concerned with him as a Heretic--that is to say, a man whose view of things has the hardihood to differ with mine" (22). W. J. Lohman, examining the critical work of Kipling's detractors, also realizes that Kipling often questions and even attacks basic English assumptions, such as the notion that cockney is vulgar. He concludes that "charges of propaganda can . . . be accounted for in terms of the readers' determination to defend their own threatened world view" (187). Therefore, many of Kipling's critics, in a defensive posture, psychologically transferred their own uncomfortable feelings onto hypothetical native peoples and labeled Kipling a racist.

Along with a new openness evidenced by many Kipling scholars, the end of the twentieth century has also produced Orientalism, an exposé of the West's methods of dominating the rest of the world. Orientalism does literary studies a great service by creating new ways of studying imperialism, thereby increasing critical interest in Kipling. It also shows that imperialism has a long history and is self-perpetuating. However, many of its tenets obscure these benefits. In *Orientalism*, Said attempts to explain that close reading "does not entail what lies hidden in the Orientalist text, but analysis rather of the text's surface" (20). He indicates surface racism is real and should not be ignored. However, Shamsul Islam demonstrates in

Kipling's Law that complete exteriority or reading "in terms of politics or history or journalistic reportage is hardly just. Such an approach would be very superficial indeed, and it would not take us beyond the surface meaning" (54).

The Orientalist approach obscures even the surface meaning of a text. For example, in his introduction to the Penguin edition of *Kim*, Said explains that the Woman of Shamlegh is a character from "one of Kipling's most affecting earlier short stories, 'Without Benefit of Clergy'" (17). While Said is correct in stating that the Woman of Shamlegh first saw the light of day in an early short story, he cites not only the wrong story but also the wrong collection. "Without Benefit of Clergy" occurs in *Life's Handicap: Stories of Mine Own People*, while this recurrent character from "Lispeth," in *Plain Tales from the Hills* is even named in *Kim*. The plight of Ameera, Holden, and their child in "Without Benefit of Clergy" is certainly affecting, but Said is wrong when he states that she is in Lispeth's predicament "of the native woman loved, but never married, by a departed white man" (Introduction 17). Ameera and her son die of cholera, leaving the broken Holden, who loved them without bounds, in agony.

A much larger problem is *Orientalism's* claim that Western thought is inherently imperialistic and, whether manifested in literature, history, social science, or even individual consciousness, seeks to dominate and to exploit the East. Although he sets up Kipling as the epitome of Western imperialism by constantly restating the phrase "White Man" in the final chapter of *Orientalism*,

Said does not analyze a single piece of Kipling's work nor does he consult a scrap of Kipling criticism. In critiquing literature Orientalism breaks down. His theory works to explicate scientific documents and political tracts because these texts seek literally to represent reality.

However, literature, especially literature with utopic vision, rarely seeks to mirror the real world in the same manner as non-fiction. As Umberto Eco explains in *The Limits of Interpretation*, all fictional worlds "are handicapped and small worlds" (74). Eco later uses "incomplete" to describe fictional worlds because, as he says, they cannot represent reality; instead, they are "invitation[s] to cooperate in setting up a *conceivable* world" (75, emphasis in text) which allows them to parallel not reproduce reality. By equating art with politics, *Orientalism* denies literature its subtleties and beauty; it also misinterprets irony, satire, and pastiche. Utopian works and other fictional moral universes as those Kipling creates simply do not claim to represent the realities of social order in the same way that political tracts do.

Algerian writer Albert Memmi's discussion of "colonizers," a term he uses as synonymous with imperialists, gives Kipling studies a different starting point. Memmi explains that "the colonialist stresses those things which keep him separate, rather than emphasizing that [which] might contribute to the formulation of a joint community" (71). He says that "the most serious blow suffered by the colonized is being removed from history" (91). Unlike

Orientalism, Memmi's discussion allows for alternate interpretations of the relationships which imperialism created. If literary works break down the barriers and include non-Western world-views, as Kipling's Indian fiction does, they cannot unreservedly be seen as discourses justifying imperialism. By beginning with Memmi's definition of the imperialist, critics can, with Irving Howe, make the observation that "Kipling did see the people of India as vigorous, full of humor and energy, deeply worthy." The next logical step is to ask with Howe, "[H]ow are we to explain that in the pages of this apologist for imperialism, the masses of India seem more alive, more autonomous than in the pages of writers claiming political correctness?" (40).

Because "imperialism," or as Hilton Brown calls it "that bugbear" (105), is such a loaded word in literary studies, it needs to be either redefined or modified in discussions of Kipling. Many critics, like Howe, find a split personality in Kipling's writings because they seem to endorse and to execrate imperialism at the same time. A. O. J. Cockshut, the editor of the Oxford edition of *Life's Handicap*, regards this dualism to be "the paradox of Kipling" (xvii). Brown, however, finds that Kipling's fictional "imperialism" is of a fundamentally moral nature; it is a utopic representation of a future possibility not a compilation of political treatises. Kipling, says Brown, sees the colonies as "sister nations," equals who only require assistance to enter the modern world (105).

The Masonic prayer "L'Envoi" (*LH* 296) indicates that Kipling sees imperialism not as the political subjugation of India, nor as exploitation of other lands' resources. Instead, this poem, reminiscent of Milton's poems of service and of "The Prayer of St. Francis," reveals that Kipling believes imperialism equals service. In "L'Envoi" the speaker humbly asks that the "Great Overseer" (4) "[h]elp [him] to need no aid from men / That [he] may help such men as need" (27-28). Therefore, Kipling's philosophy, unlike actual imperialism, is humanitarian in nature. The service-oriented individual should be selfless and recognize the beauty of a world where one can see "naught common" (24). Since the world is heterogeneous and other cultures should not be seen as lowly or common, the "servant" must respect and validate those others while seeking to give them the help they require. The Englishman cannot serve India without at least attempting to understand its cultures.

There is certainly a great deal of naiveté in Kipling's belief that imperialism can be solely humanitarian and service-oriented. However, utopian visions dismiss the negative aspects of the utopia because the vision itself is more important. While Kipling understood many of the malignant aspects of actual imperialism, such as the brutality with which the British extorted money from the people, he focuses on the benefits which inter-cultural communication brings to all parties. This is not to say he ignores the evils which Europe foisted upon subject peoples. In fact, Kipling repeatedly subverts the imperial enterprise in both his fiction and his

poetry. But Kipling's preoccupation is with a hypothetical future state in which all forms of intolerance are muted, if not eliminated.

In order to limit the amount of damage created by uniformly equating Kipling's philosophy of service with the Orientalist concept of imperialism, Pathan critic Shamsul Islam provides guidelines for modern critical studies in Kipling. He enumerates four general precepts which the critic must recognize:

- 1) Kipling is a writer of depth and vision.
- 2) Kipling's imperial theme cannot be equated with British Imperialism, since the relation of Kipling's philosophy to the Imperial Idea is much more profound than has been suggested.
- 3) An investigation of Kipling's ideas must be based on a close study of his work in their totality, and not on a few isolated pieces used as crutches for projecting one's pre-conceived notions about him.
- 4) Kipling must be studied in relation to his age. (4-5)

By reading large quantities of Kipling's writing, the critic is more likely to avoid misinterpreting the author's "imperialism." Islam implicitly backs up Lucile Russell Carpenter's explanation that by "choosing isolated incidents or quotations, one can prove anything by the Bible or Kipling. And following a false premise with crooked reasoning, one arrives at a false conclusion" (5). Thus, a critic who wishes to study Kipling in good faith must be willing to explore a wide variety of works and to be open to the spirit of the entire canon.

Since Kipling's fiction often incorporates many cultures into a single story, anthropology is a particularly appropriate tool when examining his Indian fiction. Cultural anthropology's exhortation to understand a text's local knowledge promises to clarify Rudyard Kipling's ideas concerning cultural interaction. In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz explains that to interpret a world-view different from one's own, one must have "a familiarity with the imaginative universe" of the other (13). "See[ing] things from the native's point of view" (Geertz, *Local Knowledge* 56), though difficult, is the only way to understand people of radically different culture:

Understanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity. The more I manage to follow what the Moroccans are up to, the more logical, and the more singular, they seem. It renders them accessible: setting them in the frame of their own banalities, it dissolves their opacity. (*Interpretation* 14)

In other words, anthropology works because it refuses to stereotype or rely on hearsay. Because anthropology circumvents the critical double-bind of characterization, a Geertzian interpretation allows a text to stand on its own terms. Without reading from the text's point of view, whether that of a story or a culture, criticism continues its semantic somersaults: characters are stereotypes if they conform too closely to a preconceived notion of "type," or

characters fail to be representative if they have too many idiosyncrasies.

Whereas Orientalist theory requires "surface readings," anthropologists seek to understand cultures, "assemblages of texts" through close reading and "participant observation" (Clifford 41). Participant observation requires "getting as close as possible" to the mindset of the people (Clifford 52). In *Local Knowledge* Geertz even refers to good anthropology as "like grasping a proverb, catching an allusion, seeing a joke--or . . . reading a poem" (70). Cultures are as much texts as literature is, and the only way to understand a text is to read it closely, to imbibe its common sense and its "local knowledge" (75). *Orientalism* and criticism derived from it reject the idea of close reading in practice if not in theory, and, as a result, cannot come to terms with the culture(s) imbedded within the text.

Geertz explains that "the aim of anthropology is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse" (*Interpretation* 14). That is, he and others like him attempt to break down the barricades Memmi describes as dividing people and cultures. This disruption of barriers is exactly what Kipling does in works like "Without Benefit of Clergy," "The Bridge-Builders," and *Kim*. Marcus and Fisher expand upon Geertzian anthropology and make the point that anthropology wants not only to understand the other but also to expand the self: "[I]n using portraits of other cultural patterns to reflect self-critically on our own ways, anthropology disrupts common sense [Western] and makes us reexamine our taken-for-granted

assumptions" (1). Kipling seeks to question Western assumptions also. Stories such as the Pathan monologues of *In Black and White* and the Strickland stories disrupt, or completely replace, a Western mindset with an Indian world-view. These stories, as Lohman repeatedly points out, attempt to create "culture shock" in the Western reader.

Understanding another culture, as Geertz explains in *Local Knowledge*, entails thinking with a native mind. He couches this "thinking with a native mind" in terms of comprehending "colloquial wisdom" or proverbs (75). Native proverbs occur throughout Kipling's work, especially in the Indian fiction. From a Geertzian perspective, Kipling's proverbs manifest a distinctly "native" world-view. The common sense of these texts is Indian, which is the reason criticism has so many difficulties investigating Kipling's work. Therefore, an anthropological approach can bear the fruit other efforts have failed to provide. The Indian stories must read from the native perspective to appreciate their local knowledge.

Rudyard Kipling's Indian fiction, most of which was written in Kipling's early period (1888-1901), "ha[s] not been properly understood or appraised. [The stories] have escaped criticism" (Singh 69). The Indian fiction also has the benefit of containing a greater number of cultures than the later work. This poly-culturalism, therefore, opens the Indian fiction up for a more fruitful anthropological explication. Kipling designed these works to create

cross-cultural communication and tolerance. He presents Indian consciousnesses to expand Western conceptions.

Kipling's imbedded native world-views contribute toward his vision of empire. These aspects of his work are not separate entities but rather elements of his idealistic philosophy. However, a Geertzian perspective represents a valuable way to begin a discussion of Empire because Kipling's portrayal of non-Western peoples is a continual stumbling block for critics. These two elements, the depiction of Indians and Kipling's philosophy of empire, are inextricably united in the Kipling world-view because the author believes that through imperialism both East and West can benefit from contact with "the other." However, Islam's assertion that Kipling's "imperialism" does not parallel that of the historical Raj compels a new definition of "empire." Empire, for Kipling, is not imperialism *per se*; it is an attitude of tolerance for, and the possibility for conscious integration of, other cultures. Kipling's Empire, thus, is a collage of cultures. Each system exists in its entirety with the potential for transforming and evolving through mutual overlapping.

Edward Said proclaims that the "future of criticism" is the breaking down of barriers and promoting "traffic between cultures" ("Future of Criticism" 956). Kipling, however, believes that the future of the world resides in this traffic between cultures. Kipling's Indian stories consistently reveal that exposure to the other expands the consciousness and enhances the quality of mental life. Therefore,

the first chapter of this study seeks to illustrate the ways in which people encounter the other. The representative stories involve the British in India in addition to Indian peoples. The Pathan monologue "At Howli Thana" is especially important because it is written entirely from "the native point of view" and, therefore, particularly open to an anthropological reading.

The second chapter elaborates upon Kipling's portrayal of cultural misreaders. The stories in this section represent a brief sampling of fiction containing wayward Britons. Kipling inflicts serious penalties on characters who violate his concept of tolerant identification with, and reading of the other. The texts (the other characters who are being misread) often assert their rights and punish the British characters.

The final chapter examines the inter-cultural fusion which is the focus of Kipling's Empire. Kipling's philosophy of empire is idealistic; it seeks to combine the best parts of all cultures to create a stronger, more pluralistic and tolerant world. Because of contact with each other, cultural systems become capable of melding with others, being molded, and re-forming. The author feels that no culture can long endure which does not meld with another. Britain's salvation lies in the diversity of the East, which is one reason why Kipling so violently opposed the Christianization of India (Islam 79). The Indian fiction shows the potential symbiosis of East and West may be accomplished through the vehicle of empire. Kipling foresaw the global community which would soon disrupt all nations wishing

to remain isolationist, and he wished to prepare for it. The only way for Britain (or any other nation) to survive, as he saw it, was to maintain a close relationship with other nations. He wished to expand the cultural gene pool and open minds to new possibilities so that the benefits of foreign cultures could be accessible to all peoples.

Kipling apprehends a world of tolerance where cultures could blend and fuse to create a global society in which diversity and difference are appreciated and endorsed. Kipling does not intend his vision to be oppressive like the British Raj. His portrayal of readers of culture who make poor judgments shows that he at least partially understands the destructive nature of actual imperialism. However, in his personal philosophy, as depicted in his fictional, utopian worlds, imperialism can be benevolent. As Islam emphatically proclaims, Kipling's empire is not the British Empire; it is a union which would serve the best interests of the entire world.

Kipling's vision of Empire stems from his desire to create dialogue between cultures, thus undermining provincialism and cultural isolation. He seeks to unify the world in its diversity. Kipling sees the melding of cultures as the way to perfect human consciousness. Through contact with the other an individual's, or a culture's, awareness can expand into unprecedented avenues. Kipling's fiction asks the reader to look at the world in unfamiliar ways, to see through another's eyes. He believes that empire can serve as an adequate, albeit flawed, vehicle in the process of disseminating knowledge.

Kipling begs us to recognize his vision, the vision he expresses through the Lama in *Kim*: "to those who follow the Way, there is neither black nor white." Kipling did see that other peoples and their beliefs deserve respect. He also warns the West, as he does in "Recessional," that its seeming superiority is a temporary illusion: "dust that builds on dust." Those who with "frantic boast and foolish word" declare Britain to be better than its empire need their God's mercy because undervaluing others is the worst aspect of colonialism. Denigrating non-Western peoples is the source of all the evil of European imperialism.

While Kipling's ideas about imperialism were often used to justify the existence of the British Empire, and later, American imperialism, he ultimately transcended the project in which his contemporaries were engaged. Along with the subversive elements within his work, the inter-cultural aspects of his utopian dream are particularly valuable because they show the equality of all peoples: "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet, / . . . But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, / When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth" ("Ballad of East and West" 1-4). Our world now has jet planes, radios, and satellite systems linking different parts of the globe to each other, but we still grapple with the issues of cultural diversity, tolerance, and community. Kipling foresaw, and wished to prepare us for, a world community. We should not see his

ideas as apologetics for enslaving entire continents. His philosophy is an experiment in diversity.

Chapter One

The Imperialist, the Reader, and the Poly-cultural Text

In *The Limits of Interpretation*, Umberto Eco says, “[T]he rights of interpreters have been overstressed” (6) and the “intent” and “rights” (56) of the text have been downplayed. In other words, a text “selects its own interpretations” (61), but criticism has largely ignored this fact. Therefore, readers of texts fall into two groups: misreaders and interpreters. While the interpreters critique a text by respecting its rights, misreaders “use” the text as a “means to start from it in order to get something else, even [at] the risk of misinterpreting it” (57). Kipling’s writings show an awareness of Eco’s distinction. Whenever British and Indian cultures meet in Kipling’s writing, the stories themselves exemplify how to or how not to read: characters in the Indian fiction are either good or bad interpreters of cultures. The “good” interpreters recognize the rights of Indian cultures, and the “bad” misreaders violate those rights in one way or another.

These characters-as-readers either increase their awareness of cultural assumptions while reading another culture, or they pay for

their presumption. In effect, to avoid misreading these Westerners must resist their own culture because it forces their assumptions upon another text. The imperialistic misreader judges the unfamiliar by standards indigenous to the West, which is patently unfair to the other cultures in the text. In other words, Kipling creates poly-cultural texts--texts which contain more than one culture, and characters who do not respect these other ways of seeing the world suffer greatly.

Kipling understands and respects the cultures of India so much that he refuses to stereotype them. While actual British subjects and values may be interpreted and evaluated by traditional methods, a British character cannot, for example, impose a Western mindset on a Pathan. In Kipling's work the "bad reader" is a Briton who judges an Indian character by thinking of him as an English creation. This process causes the British to stereotype non-Western peoples because they do not conform to a Western value system.

Kipling, through his stories about cultural interaction, shows that Westerners are often blinded by their own assumptions when perusing material from foreign sources. The character, like a Geertzian interpreter of culture, must actively resist judging other cultures by his own value system, even on questions of morality. Good readers "see through the eyes of the native" (Geertz, *Local Knowledge* 56). Succumbing to the world-view of the West thwarts coming to terms with the text's "local knowledge." A competent anthropologist "reads" from a native perspective whether the text is a

written document, story, or poem, or the nebulous set of mental baggage usually referred to as culture.

Kipling reveals the dangers of assuming one's assumptions to be "correct" by showing three ways characters misread poly-cultural material. He also provides examples of a better way to approach diversity, an anthropological understanding of the subject. Like the correct approach, the three incorrect methods involve the acquisition of knowledge. The first type of misreading entails the reader's failing to realize that there is a text to be interpreted. The character never acknowledges the existence of native peoples nor their cultures. In "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes," the title character falls into the City of the Dead because he does not know that such a place could exist. His unfamiliarity with Hindu beliefs makes it impossible for him even to imagine a place where cataleptics are buried alive. Similarly, in "At Howli Thana" the British destroy an entire native police force because they force European standards on a people with vastly different traditions.

The second kind of misreading occurs when Westerners recognize tother ways of thinking but do not fully understand the text to be interpreted. The character does not actually "read" the other at all. He succumbs "to a hallucinatory response" (Eco 21) by assuming that the text has no rights. An example of this type of textual violation is Dravot and Carnehan's invasion of Kafiristan in "The Man Who Would Be King." They study the Kafirs because they wish to conquer them, not because they wish to interpret their

culture. One of them is consequently beheaded, and the other is crucified.

The final type of misreading involves mistakenly employing an inappropriate set of values to interpret the text. The characters who commit this error are intimate with “native” texts; however, they fail to purge their minds of their accustomed ways of thinking and inadvertently make false judgments. For example, Pansay, the character from “The Phantom Rickshaw,” who drives himself insane through the effects of his guilty conscience, shares the same British culture as his fellow native, Mrs. Wessington. However, he fails to empathize with her and, as a result, misreads her feelings and his own mind. Eco calls this type of reader a “user” because he violates the “rights” of the text (57).

Just as the three forms of misreading happen because of either partial or complete blockages of knowledge through the interference of cultural assumptions, so is the correct way to approach another culture to read from a familiarity with that culture’s native ways of thinking (Geertz, *Local Knowledge* 56). Eco explains that limiting critique to the text’s parameters produces an “interpretation,” not a misreading. The resulting interpretation may be a good one or a bad one, but in either case, the text itself maintains control. The narrator of “My Own True Ghost Story” interprets by the light of the text’s “local knowledge.” Consequently, he interprets his surroundings accurately and realizes that the group of ghosts he has been hearing is only a rodent in the next room.

Whenever characters take control of the text and govern it in ignorance or without taking native ways of knowing into account, they commit the same type of imperialism as the historical British in India. These people completely rob the "text" of its autonomy. By presenting this type of domineering behavior, Kipling exposes Western assumptions which have limited usefulness in the interpretation of other cultures.

From opposite points of view, "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes" and "At Howli Thana" display how often the British in India fail to realize that they deal on a day-to-day basis with other cultures. Morrowbie Jukes, from *The Phantom Rickshaw* story, exemplifies the severely debilitating ignorance of a Briton who never really sees that India is full of Indians. "Strange Ride" explains how little the British, represented by Jukes, know of the people they rule on the Indian subcontinent. The *In Black and White* story, "At Howli Thana" shows, from a Pathani perspective, how much British ignorance can hurt both Indians and the daily operation of justice. Without apprehending that Indians work from a non-Western set of cultural assumptions, the British impose their own systems upon the people they govern. The administrators' misreadings of the native peoples cause them to assume that India operates in ways congruous to the West. These Westerners do not comprehend that the subcontinent is not Europe. They fail to realize that there is a native text to be read.

Because Morrowbie Jukes has no idea that Hindus believe cataleptics are living dead and, therefore, must be isolated from society, he has no idea that there is a City of the Dead within the confines of his province. This ignorance proves almost fatal because he accidentally finds his way into the walled-off Hindu village reminiscent of Dante's *Inferno*. There is no escape from this village because it lies at the center of a sand pit with unscaleable sides. Jukes, since he has no conception of such a place, carelessly rides into the pit. Once confined with the rest of the damned, he quickly realizes that what he thought was the innate superiority of the British people is only a foolish delusion. In the confinement of this city the strongest survive, and Jukes understands that on the outside only the technology and brute force of British imperialism divide the English from the Indians.

Once stripped of his Sahibdom, Jukes does not have enough power to save his horse from becoming a feast for the villagers. For the first time in his life, Jukes does not have the shelter of his white skin to protect him. He is the only white man in this village and what he thought of as his superiority over India boils down to formerly having an army at his back. Once he is alone with the oppressed, they stop referring to him by the honorific "Sahib" and avoid calling him "Sir" (WWW 193). Race is meaningless in this world. However, Jukes has the will to dominate others. Only by threatening murder does he avoid falling under the domination of people he used to consider inferior.

In this scene, the character of British imperialism comes sharply into focus: refusing to understand or work with the natives, the British have to rely on their more advanced technology and policies of intimidation to maintain control. Once he reestablishes his equilibrium, Jukes is able once again to intimidate several of the Hindu villagers. Because the villagers are malnourished, Jukes can exploit his greater physical strength, which he threatens to use in order to maintain his superior position. Without weapons and the will to overawe others with them, Englishmen find that they have no more power over the Indians. Like the murdered Briton Jukes finds in one of the “dens,” the holes in which the villagers live, the English are no more superhuman than any other human beings.

Without the help of Indians, the British in India cannot survive. Jukes’s Hindu servant, Dunnoo, pulls Jukes from his imprisonment. The city of the damned is such a well-kept secret that none of the British, in the cantonment or otherwise, knows anything of the village. Jukes appears to have disappeared into thin air. Had the faithful Dunnoo followed the advice of his fellow servants, Jukes would also have died in the pit. Only Dunnoo of all the Indians in the compound has made an effort to release him from the prison in which his ignorance has placed him. Ignorance of native culture causes the fall. Knowledge of native culture is the only chance for salvation. Until he recognizes the rope Dunnoo lowers to him, Jukes remains entrapped.

While "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes" discloses that failing to recognize a native text inevitably hurts a naive reader like Jukes, "At Howli Thana," a monologue with a Pathan speaker, reveals that ignoring indigenous culture not only disables Western conceptions but also adversely affects Indian people. Afzal Khan, a former member of the native police force, is being interviewed by an Englishman. Khan seeks employment as a messenger because he no longer has the means to support his family. The Pathan explains how the thieves of the city and the native police made a deal to avoid the misery of the summer heat. Khan tells the Sahib to whom he is speaking how order was kept so that neither the criminals nor the police had to work during the most oppressive hours of the day. As long as the criminals refrained from thieving during the day and turned over one of their own to face charges for all crimes committed at any other time, the native police promised not to pursue the felons. The English supervisors learn of this deal, and, instead of explaining their concept of an ideal police force, sneak into the thana to steal the arms and police-book while the officers are asleep. When the officers wake in the morning, they logically assume that their personal enemies have broken into the station to disgrace them. After all, who would suspect the police of robbing their own station? To save their honor, the native officers fake an attack upon the station and arrest their enemies. The British wait for the set-up to work to its logical conclusion, then arrest the officers. Only Afzal Khan escapes.

Kipling's reputation for racism and intolerance stems from stories like this one. Sandison explains that people who read this story from the Sahibs' perspective will naturally see vice in the native police because they expect Kipling, because he is of British descent, to do the same (71). For example, Boris Ford interprets such stories as examples of Kipling's "colour prejudice" (63), not realizing that his interpretation is based solely on Western ideals. Cultural assumptions of this nature ignore that Kipling evidences no negative judgment of Afzal Khan, and the Pathan believes himself to be innocent.

By showing the collision of Pathani and British conceptions of justice, Kipling outlines the problems with both systems. The Pathans betray a trust, and the English impose foreign regulations upon the Indians but never explain them. The situation itself is more criminal than either group's actions. Each group does what it thinks is right. However, their ideas of "right" are mutually exclusive. The British officials see laziness in the native police, but such readers ignore that a Western work-day is "unnatural" in an Indian environment, especially in "the hot weather." The British authorities, not understanding that the daylight hours are traditionally a time of rest, create a situation where the Pathans feel they must cut deals with the enemy. Afzal Khan feels that he and his fellow officers have done nothing wrong. All he knows is that for some reason the "black wrath" (ST 116) of the British has been unleashed. He also knows that one should flee from the anger of

Englishmen. They are “white devils” and one never knows what they will do next.

Khan’s story contains no discrepancies; he does not lie to his prospective employer. He presents the most damning elements in the same straightforward manner as any other information. He does not understand that his testimony is compromising in Western eyes. Since the Sahib hires Afzal Khan, and even allows him to move in his family, this new employer recognizes that Khan’s only flaw is not having the training to carry out Western ideas of peace keeping. He is not a criminal but an honorable man who has not been taught what the British expect. Far from passing judgment on Khan, Kipling’s only intrusion into the story is the epigraph--a native proverb, “His own shoe, his own head” (ST 112). This phrase is roughly parallel to the English expression, “[M]ake no judgment until you have walked a mile in another’s shoes.” Thus, Kipling like the Sahib employer, shows that the entire event is a result of the incompatibility of the two conceptions of “justice.”

In the second form of misreading, the character begins to see that Indian cultures are relevant when interpreting an Indian “text.” However, characters still dominate the text by interpreting from a Western perspective because lack of knowledge forces them to rely too heavily on their own cultural assumptions. Knowing a little about native culture is certainly better than knowing nothing at all, but like most opportunists, Dravot and Carnehan of “The Man Who Would Be King” are more concerned with their own advancement

than the effects their cultural reading might have on the “native” text, in this case, the Kafirs. For this reason, when they invade the country of Kafiristan, they acquire only a superficial knowledge of the people they intend to conquer. If they truly understood the people or cared about them, they would come as friends and interpreters not as rulers and misreaders.

Unlike Jukes, who fails to notice that there is another culture around him, these men learn about the native peoples for the sole purpose of subjugating them and creating an Empire in which they can reign as king-gods. Although these men learn enough of Indian culture to come up with convincing disguises, their knowledge of the Kafirs and the land is minimal. They realize, like true imperialists, that understanding the ruled is not necessarily a prerequisite to conquest. They have superior technology and plan to use it to subdue the native people. Dravot and Carnehan’s belief in their own innate superiority is even greater than that of Jukes, and it is far less subtle.

Because the Kafirs are, as Carnehan says, “fair men--fairer than you or me--with yellow hair” (WWW 226), the imperialists have the chance of seeing how similar they and their “subjects” are. These readers dominate the unfamiliar Kafir texts, and as a result, finally attack themselves and their own culture. By showing the “heathen” Kafirs to be as English as their English conquerors, Kipling illustrates that Britons denigrate themselves when they forget that these other people share their humanity. Dravot and Carnehan are

like the flag-waving rabble Kipling describes in "The English Flag": "[W]hat should they know of England who only England know?-- / The poor little street-bred people that vapour and fume and brag, / They are lifting their heads in the stillness to yelp at the English Flag!" (2-4). If the two conquerors had the ability to see from the native point of view and to understand how it feels to be subject to an ignorant, foreign power, they would not be inclined to set themselves up as kings. However, Dravot and Carnehan ultimately fail to see the connection between themselves and the people they oppress.

Although this attack on Britain itself is damning enough, Draudt points out that Kipling has set up this story so the narrator is in the same situation as the two imperialists (326). The narrator, even though he is not a direct participant in Dravot and Carnehan's overt imperialism, is an accomplice in the two men's actions and beliefs. Helen Pike Bauer also recognizes that Kipling attacks imperialism. She states that "there is no doubt ["The Man Who Would Be King"] contains a searching exploration of the dangers of imperial ambition" (41). Similarly, Bascom realizes that Kipling condemns the narrator's imperialism. He explains that the narrator sympathizes with the two conquerors because they act out the journalist's "repressed ambitions" (167). The narrator does not seem to be aware of his own domineering world-view, but only through his aid can Dravot and Carnehan start out on their expedition. By

allowing the two would-be kings to use his set of encyclopedias, the narrator "signs on" (167), as Bascom calls it, with the imperialists.

By placing the narrator in such a situation, Kipling implies that imperialism is inevitable whenever there is a lack of empathy. Just as Dravot and Carnehan's knowledge of military science allows them to conquer the Kafirs, so the narrator has final control over the text. Although the narrator has not actually subjugated the Kafirs, he has aided the real conquerors, Dravot and Carnehan, by giving them aid and supplies. These two men have paid with their lives for their conquest of another culture. Instead of interpreting the Kafirs, they use the people for their own purposes. Consequently, Dravot is beheaded, Carnehan dies a beggar after having been crucified by the Kafirs, and the narrator must live with the haunting memories of the event, memories which he reinscribes in his own story. "The Man Who Would Be King" reveals the dangers and pitfalls for the reader who would be king of someone else's text.

In the third type of misreading, Pansay, despite his personal detailed knowledge of his subject, still co-opts the other by misinterpreting signifiers. He should have been more careful when interpreting even the well-known because miscommunication occurs as a result of his laxity. "The Phantom Rickshaw" shows how familiar signifiers can become unknowable. The narrator of this story claims that India is inherently more knowable than Britain while revealing the reasons for Jack Pansay's mental breakdown and death. This ghost story exemplifies Kipling's demonstration that the

world, even the world of the British civil service in India, is extremely complicated, much more complex than the British are willing to believe. When Pansay clings to simplistic assumptions about Mrs. Wessington, he undermines his humanity. In fact, the human mind is so complex that Pansay cannot even understand his own, much less hers.

The narrator who begins this story was a close friend of the late Pansay. However, he seems to have learned little from Pansay's miserable end. He refuses to question his statement that India is innately knowable. Even though he believes in the transparency of India, his own assertion actually delineates the subcontinent's unknowability. The narrator's portion of the story begins with the following paragraph:

One of the few advantages that India has over England is a great Knowability. After five years' service a man is directly or indirectly acquainted with the two or three hundred Civilians in his Province, all the Messes of ten or twelve Regiments and Batteries, and some fifteen hundred other people of the non- official caste. In ten years his knowledge should be doubled, and at the end of twenty he knows, or knows something about, every Englishman in the Empire, and may travel anywhere and everywhere without paying hotel bills. (WWW 155)

The narrator's words even contradict themselves in these opening lines. His claim of India's knowability is undermined in the next

sentence: this great knowledge is only a passing acquaintance. Further, "knowing something about" does not constitute great knowledge. It does show, however, how superficially the British understand each other, even after twenty years' service. If they know so little about each other, they certainly cannot know much about India, or anything else.

The British characters first begin to misinterpret themselves and each other when Pansay and Mrs. Wessington believe that they fall in love. During their boat trip back home to India, the two become intimate. Rather, Mrs. Wessington falls in love while Pansay enjoys a season of adulterous indulgence at her expense. Once he tires of this pleasure, he tells her that he is "sick of her presence, tired of her company, and weary of the sound of her voice" (WWW 158). Although he has known this woman on the most intimate of terms, he does not understand her to any great depth. A romantic or sexual relationship, despite the "closeness" required, remains founded upon external contact with the other; they never reach an understanding of each other's mental processes. Pansay unrealistically assumes that carnal knowledge, "knowing" a partner in the biblical sense, can be equated with understanding another's mind.

Pansay's lack of knowledge makes all his assertions questionable. He believes himself to have a complete understanding of women. He is such an authority in his own mind that he finds he can make sweeping generalities concerning the opposite sex: "Ninety-

nine women out of a hundred would have wearied of me as I wearied of them; seventy-five of that number would have promptly avenged themselves by active and obtrusive flirtation with other men" (WWW 158). The reader sees in Pansay's own words that his trust in the knowability of others is unfounded. His knowledge of both himself and Mrs. Wessington is faulty. If his understanding of women is as great as he claims, he would have realized that she was not one of the ninety-nine women in his hypothetical category. From the start of their relationship, Pansay has understood neither himself nor her; otherwise, he would not have claimed that "she and I were desperately and unreasoningly in love with one another" (WWW 158). Similarly, Mrs. Wessington believes Pansay snubs her because of something she has done. She repeatedly utters the refrain, "It's some hideous mistake, I'm sure. *Please* forgive me, Jack" (cf. WWW 162). She fails to realize that his lack of empathy and fear of being honest with her are what cause him to behave in a manifestly vile manner.

That Pansay has only a tenuous understanding of his own mind becomes apparent when Mrs. Wessington pines away and dies after he rejects her. Inconsolable guilt, which he refuses to acknowledge until upon his death-bed, replaces the unmitigated hatred which he felt at the time he spurned her. Even his engagement to the graceful Kitty Mannering cannot dim the remorse he feels for being the cause of his former lover's death. At this point the "unutterably mean hound" (WWW 160), as he calls himself, begins to hallucinate, seeing the dead Mrs. Wessington and her

"phantom rickshaw" at every turn. His mental breakdown, caused by the guilt he feels but steadfastly refuses to acknowledge, is so rapid that he dies shortly after his engagement with Kitty.

Other characters see the degeneration of Pansay's mind, but they attribute it to delirium tremens or overwork. These theories further emphasize how little the British understand their own people or their own minds. Pansay has never touched a drop of alcohol in his life, a fact with which all the Simla people are familiar. The ridiculousness of blaming the deterioration of his mind on drink is immediately apparent even to those who propose such an explanation. Similarly, Dr. Heatherlegh's diagnoses of overwork and undigested food fail to recognize that Pansay's problems do not stem from indigestion. The doctor, with his misdiagnosis of Pansay's mental disorder, states, "Man, I certify to your mental cure, and that's as much as to say I've cured most of your bodily ailments" (WWW 169). Pansay has been on a vacation of several months; therefore, he realizes that the condition of his mind has nothing to do with overwork or food. However, he does not realize that his problem resides in his guilt. The apparition continues to haunt him and reappears only minutes after his supposed cure. The fundamental unknowability of the human mind, even by a physician, reinforces the absurdity of the claim of "India's great knowability," or even Britain's great knowability. Since all of the people in this story are British and intimate with their own culture, these characters believe that their thoughts and motives are transparent. This is not

the case because correct interpretation is not automatic, even when one shares the background of another. The inability to empathize makes seeing the world through another's eyes impossible.

Since it is impossible for any individual or group to understand its own culture completely, the British should be even less confident about comprehending Indian cultures. Their misconceptions allow natives to subvert and revise aspects of European culture. "Gemini," an *In Black and White* story which deals directly with legal matters, reveals how Indians can completely disable the foreign institution of British justice. While the British believe that their legal system works well enough to be imposed on the population of the subcontinent, Kipling's epigraph, a native proverb, discredits Western conceptions of justice. The epigraph, "Great is the justice of the White Man--greater the power of a lie" (ST 117), indicates that to work at all, a Western court must assume that everything said is true.

The speaker in "Gemini," Durga Dass, instructs a Sahib in matters of justice. He wishes that the Sahib would inform other whites how justice has been miscarried in a recent court case. Durga Dass informs the Sahib that he has been wrongfully beaten by men who owed his identical twin brother money. The men attacked him because they believed him to be his brother, Ram Dass. In order to receive justice from the English court system, he decided to "purchase witnesses by the score" (ST 120). None of these "witnesses" was actually present nor did they know anything about

the circumstances to which they were to testify. However, each man would give evidence that the landholder had set his servants on Dass. They would also testify that these servants had beaten and robbed him of two hundred rupees. The people understand that to receive justice through the British courts, they must have witnesses. Durga Dass, because he has been wrongfully beaten, believed that he was entitled to reparation. Therefore, he intended to buy witnesses who would testify that he was beaten and robbed--although he was not robbed nor was the landholder directly responsible. Believing that 200 rupees was a fair and just settlement, he decided to have his witnesses claim that this amount was taken from him during his beating.

Discovering that his brother plans to go to court over this grievance, Ram Dass drugs Durga and goes ahead with the lawsuit himself. He pretends that the beating happened to him. Because of the testimony of the "witnesses" whom Durga Dass had intended to purchase, Ram Dass is awarded "both the five hundred rupees that [the landlord] robbed from Ram Dass and yet other five hundred rupees because of the great injury [the landlord] did [by beating Ram Dass]" (ST 121). Durga Dass's own witnesses disbelieve his story that the beating happened to him and state that his brother wound up making 800 rupees more than Durga himself had planned. Although many of the witnesses cannot remember the exact amount they testified as having been stolen, they deny any possibility of

Durga's having been beaten because the landholder had no quarrel with him.

Since the dispute has already been litigated, Durga has no more recourse to the British court system. As he says, "The Justice of the English is as a great river. Having gone forward, it does not return" (ST 124). He begs the Sahib to whom he is speaking to write down everything that he has said so that the rest of the English will understand how faulty their courts and assumptions are. A Western court cannot operate in a non-Western culture because values and ideals are not compatible. Durga is correct in his evaluation that concepts of justice are culture-specific; Geertz also explains that "[law] works by the light of local knowledge" (*Local Knowledge* 167). The Indians, because they think they understand how the British court system works, must find "witnesses" to perjure testimony so that justice can be served. Unfortunately, the British system, through its misreading of litigants, also allows unscrupulous types like Ram Dass to benefit wrongly. Cultures with different traditions paralyze Western conceptions of justice. Western ideals are even less apt to work once they are taken out of the cultural context which gave them birth. Having imposed a foreign justice system upon India, the British have destroyed any possibility for justice, and have tied their own hands.

In the *Phantom Rickshaw* ghost story, "My Own True Ghost Story," Kipling provides a way to understand one's surroundings without becoming too simplistic or otherwise misreading a text. The

author shows how seeking out information makes the mysterious become mundane, knowable. "My Own True Ghost Story" begins with a catalogue of possible ghosts to be encountered in India. The narrator is careful to explain that belief in ghosts, or certain kinds of ghosts, is culturally specific. While the people believe in native ghosts, they do not appear to or attack Sahibs (WWW 178). The British do not see native ghosts because they do not believe in them. However, these same Englishmen do give credence to the possibility of European specters. The narrator explains that "every other Station owns a ghost," which shows how widespread this superstition is in ruling circles.

True to form, Kipling makes sure that there is no ghost in this ghost story. However, the terror the narrator feels is real. He believes he hears the reputed pool-playing ghosts of the dâk-bungalow in the room next door. But Kipling's point is that only ignorance of oneself and one's surroundings can inspire such mental delusions as those of the narrator in this story and Pansay in "The Phantom Rickshaw." Had Pansay explored his feelings of guilt in the same way the narrator of "My Own True Ghost Story" scrutinizes his surroundings, he would have realized the tricks that his mind was playing on him.

Once the narrator allows his ignorance free reign, he passes the night in complete terror at the very thought that "the [ghostly pool] players might want a marker" (WWW 183). Unlike Pansay, however, this narrator realizes that he is ignorant of many things in

his environment and that this causes an “unfortunate credulity.” This understanding of himself allows the man to seek out the real reason why he heard the ghostly players in the adjacent bedroom. By attempting to explain the unexplainable, the narrator finds that what ignorance has painted as supernatural and ghostly is really as mundane as a rat running along a curtain.

By making “My Own True Ghost Story” and “The Phantom Rickshaw” the only two stories in the book that deal with the supernatural, Kipling shows the reader that the answer to the mystery of “The Phantom Rickshaw” is as commonplace as an over-credulous, ignorant, and guilt-ridden mind. “My Own True Ghost Story” belittles a Pansay-type character, and by extension, any other character who responds to the unfamiliar without monitoring simplistic cultural assumptions. While Pansay is a bad reader of his environment because he fails to comprehend his own mind and its predispositions, Kipling’s narrator in the second *Phantom Rickshaw* story represents the type of reader who is sensitive enough to recognize his own prejudice and seek out new information in an effort to interpret correctly.

Kipling often explicitly denounces the ineptitude of the British in the Indian subcontinent. These indictments almost uniformly relate to the unwillingness of the English to understand the cultures of those they attempted to govern. The character who fails to acquire adequate knowledge of the text is guilty of the same blindness. Through his use of bad and good readers of other cultures, Kipling

shows that people must realize the limitations of their own world-view when dealing with "the other." Readers who acknowledge that their own assumptions are not absolutes can make more appropriate judgments concerning texts. Because the text establishes its own rights, the text itself judges the reader who misjudges it.

Chapter Two

Disrespectful Characters and Authorial Retribution

If there is one thing a reader can count on in Kipling's writings, it is the punishment of transgressors. The conclusion of "Kaa's Hunting" defines this theme: "sorrow never stays punishment . . . [and] punishment settles all scores" (*JB* 45-6). Implicit in this concept of justice is the swiftness of retribution. While the Law of the Jungle is omnipotent and omnipresent in the animal world of *The Jungle Books*, in the human world a parallel for this swift and irrevocable justice exists for inter-cultural discourse. Kipling explains in the Preface to *Life's Handicap* that the root problem of inter-cultural discourse is that "the English do not think as natives do," so East and West stare "at each other hopelessly across great gulfs of miscomprehension" (6). Because the British are in another peoples' land, the interlopers must learn to interpret and to conform to Indian sensibilities. When a character is confronted with another culture in Kipling's work, violation of the established order spells self-destruction.

Because he was aware that Britain was too often intolerant of different points of view, Kipling peppers his stories with English characters who disparage Indians or their culture. These characters are always portrayed negatively, and their racial bigotry makes them unpalatable. These British, wittingly or unwittingly, infringe on native cultural principles through ignorance and malice. Westerners who enter the subcontinent with an inflated sense of their cultural superiority and refuse to “read” the native without the blinders of their own assumptions invite disaster. While it is impossible to reach a completely “true” interpretation, Eco states that it is possible to “ascertain which interpretations are the ‘best ones’” (60). Because “every empirical reading is always an unpredictable mixture of both [interpretation and misreading]” (62), the critique which most closely allies itself to the rights of the text is more correct than one which simply “beats” texts into submission or “uses” them for purposes outside the parameters they set up.

Although Kipling, both narratively and ideologically, condemns Western misreaders, in all likelihood he did not understand all the ramifications of British imperialism in the subcontinent. Indeed, until most of the colonies were freed, it was difficult to separate parliamentary rhetoric from the actual state of affairs. Marvin Harris and Eric Ross's *Death, Sex, and Fertility* shows that Western domination created the problems which the empire officially sought to eliminate. Through imperialism's long history, the gradual changes in agriculture from subsistence to cash crop cultivation

increased social stratification and the incidence of famine (142). While Kipling repeatedly attacks the mercantilism which promoted this horrific situation, he lauds the rhetoric of service with which this same mercantilism justified itself. Apparently, he was not able or chose not to see the fundamental contradiction. He unwittingly aided the type of imperialism he despised by adopting its self-justification.

However, unlike the Imperial Government and the commercial interests which were destroying the country they claimed to be helping, Kipling does believe that Britain could aid India if Britons understood the people whom they are supposed to assist. In order to demonstrate his enmity for those characters who breach his "service" contract, Kipling chastises violators of this code. The two types of infraction are maliciously destroying those aspects of native culture with which one disagrees, and ignoring the necessity to learn about and understand the people. Kipling proclaims the latter the greater sin; if one knows enough about a subject to hate it, such a situation is better than knowing absolutely nothing. Kipling's treatment of the interplay between Christianity and Indian religions, his emphasis on respecting other belief systems, and the need in his fiction to acquire knowledge of other cultures to interact successfully in a poly-cultural setting exhibit his deep respect for non-Western peoples. Characters who denigrate what Indians hold sacred or ignore the power of India suffer.

In "Lispeth" the agents of malicious destruction are Christian missionaries. The Chaplain of Kotgarh and his wife, both significantly nameless, attempt to Christianize Lispeth, an adopted, completely anglicized hill girl. To the missionaries in this story, however, Christianity is nothing more than class-consciousness, intended to keep the hill-people "in their place" because Englishmen are "of a superior clay" (PT 10-11). The chaplain's wife allows, and even encourages, the rakish Englishman to lead on the young Lispeth. However, Christian class-consciousness condemns Lispeth for having "uncivilized Eastern instincts, such as falling in love at first sight" (PT 9). When Lispeth announces her love for the Englishman, "the Chaplain's wife shrieked with horror" (PT 8). "Lispeth," like most Kipling stories dealing with religion, seeks to expose "nineteenth-century Evangelical Christianity" by challenging "the proselytizing, educational and philanthropic motives of Church Missions" (Kemp 85). Kipling finds that Christianity is fundamentally untrustworthy, an agent which seeks to "wipe out" what it sees as "uncivilized Eastern instincts" (PT 9).

Christianity in "Lispeth" seeks not enlightenment for the hill-people, but further subjugation. Missionaries disregard the people's wants and attempt to undermine Indians' ability to choose their own destinies, as the chaplain's wife tries to force Lispeth to serve the English in Simla (PT 8). Lispeth, to the ire of the chaplain's wife, rejects proposals for keeping her in a subject position. These self-assertions earn her the label "savage" (PT 9) from the British. The

missionaries' indifference to Lispeth's beliefs and feelings eventually causes Lispeth to degenerate into a drunkard and a "bleared, wrinkled creature, exactly like a wisp of charred rag" (*PT* 11). Far from saving the benighted heathen, Christianity damns this sensitive and principled girl.

After the chaplain's wife pronounces that "Lispeth was always at heart an infidel," the narrator of the story passes judgment on this missionary: "Seeing [Lispeth] had been taken into the Church of England at the mature age of five weeks, this statement does not do credit to the Chaplain's wife" (*PT* 11). For Kipling, racism is the sole motivating factor for missionaries and other English who hold views which place native people in the lowest tier of a Western class system. The narrator's pointed comment on the chaplain's wife illustrates that she endorses a class system based on race rather than the concept of equality in the eyes of God. Despite the fact that Lispeth is from birth more "Christian" than her mentors, this missionary denies salvation to Lispeth in both this world and the next. The girl has been and always will be a heathen in missionary eyes--capable of only something as "genteel" (*PT* 8) as becoming a nurse. Characters with these attitudes maliciously attempt to belittle and destroy native culture.

Since she is a bigot, the chaplain's wife labels Lispeth "savage," "heathen," and "barbarous" because the girl does not understand that Christians lie, or at the least, conceal the truth for expediency's sake. Expecting honesty from a man because he is a Christian is

Lispeth's downfall. She believes Christians will be as truthful as she is. Unfortunately, they fail to see anything admirable in her candor. When Lispeth declares that she loves the Englishman and wants to marry him, such "indelicate folly" (*PT* 10) receives laughter and condemnation from the British. Instead of rebuking him for deceiving Lispeth, the chaplain's wife, "being a good Christian," counsels the English rake to "tell Lispeth that he was coming back to marry her" (*PT* 10) even though this is an outright falsehood. Lispeth's integrity and sincerity become the sport of the English in the story. They wail about her savage emotions, laugh at her feelings, and dismiss her from their minds.

While the English Christians decline to recognize the value of Lispeth's honesty, their callous disregard for their own moral code shows the young woman the true nature of her benefactors. In shock she leaves the mission and, upon returning in native garb, exclaims to her guardians, "You are all liars, you English" (*PT* 11). Not wishing to continue living with Christian duplicity, Lispeth returns to the hill-people who do not hold double standards. Even though a Christian since birth, she rejects this creed in favor of the ancestral religion of her people; she declares herself to be "the servant of [the goddess] Tarka Devi" (*PT* 11).

"Lispeth" is certainly a scathing commentary on the attitudes of the Christian missionaries in the Empire who, as in the epigram, "have cast out Love [with a] cold Christ and tangled Trinities" (*PT* 7). However, the story is more than an exposé of religious hypocrisy.

"Lispeth" reflects a trend in Kipling's Indian fiction which discloses the author's dissatisfaction with ignorant Westerners who would denigrate India and its people.

Just as the chaplain's wife's class-consciousness throughout "Lispeth" indicates a deep-seated ambivalence for the fates of Indian people, so does Fleete, in "The Mark of the Beast," express similar disdain for Indian culture and religion. Although the narrator of "The Mark of the Beast" describes Fleete as a "genial and inoffensive man" (*LH* 178), these traits only apply when he is in the company of other Britons. The narrator admits, even before he and Strickland, the celebrated police officer, escort Fleete through a bazaar, that Fleete's "knowledge of natives was, of course, limited" (*LH* 178). Fleete also continually complains of his inability to comprehend the Indians, even though he has never attempted to understand them. From Fleete's perspective, the natives are at fault for not being more English, and therefore, more understandable.

Fleete does not understand the people because he is not in India from altruistic motives. It is not that he cannot understand; he will not. He has come to make money, which for Kipling, equals continent raping, not the service-oriented imperialism described in "L'Envoi." Therefore, when the narrator says that Fleete came to India to "finance [his properties]" (*LH* 178), it is a signal that Fleete's character is bankrupt even if his pockets are not. The company with which Fleete celebrates the New Year reinforces how out of place he is in India. The men with whom he drinks are those who have seen

their fellows decimated by disease and overwork. While they are life-time servants of India, Fleete, a conspicuously flat character, is a newcomer who sees money where others see people in need of the basic necessities of life.

Fleete is different from the "lifers" in another significant way. While servant-imperialists like the narrator respect native culture and religion, Fleete, as an intolerant British Christian, mocks Hinduism and desecrates a shrine dedicated to Hanuman. The drunken Briton grinds "the ashes of his cigar-butt in to the forehead of the red stone image of Hanuman" and admires the "mark of the beast" he has placed there (*LH* 179). This action, the narrator carefully explains, is an exact violation of "a section of the Indian Penal Code" (*LH* 181). Through the narrator, Kipling, as artist and as human being, carefully distances himself from the ignominious Fleete. Marghanita Laski, one of Kipling's biographers, explains why Kipling remains so detached from this type of character: actions like Fleete's in Hanuman's temple are personally abhorrent to him (37). Nothing could be more offensive to the author himself than defacing a Hindu shrine. The government realizes that not all the imported Englishmen would be ideal for the pluralistic conditions in India and, backing Kipling's attitude, has penalty in force for those who fail to monitor grossly inappropriate responses to indigenous religion. The colonial government in Kipling's stories, as well as characters like the narrator and Strickland, understands the importance of maintaining respect for the native people and their beliefs.

Before Fleete dismounts from the image of the monkey-god, a leprous "Silver Man" curses him with his own mark of the beast. The clearer-headed but angry Strickland, assisted by the narrator, drags Fleete from the temple. Fleete's punishment is appropriate to his crime. As the leper's curse begins to work, Fleete's personality and habits become animalistic. Eventually, he walks on all fours and howls at the moon. The leper's curse literally turns him into a beast, representing his rabid and wolf-like attitude toward native culture. While Lispeth is virtually powerless to punish the malignant missionaries, India itself, through Hanuman's curse, is sufficiently potent to punish the wayward Fleete. Imperialists whose only aim is personal profit cannot understand or respect the people and culture they are supposed to serve. Fleete provides an example and a warning for any others of his nature, which is the reason the priests of Hanuman allow him, Strickland, and the narrator to leave otherwise unmolested.

While "The Mark of the Beast" stresses the punishment wayward characters receive for deprecating native people's beliefs, another concern of the story lies in the interplay between Christianity and other religions. Contrary to contemporary opinions back Home in England, Kipling's stories illustrate the power of Indian religions. Despite the fact that Western Christians continued to view other creeds as frauds and fairy tales, Kipling's stories emphasize the reality of the Gods. (Since Kipling almost uniformly capitalizes "gods," disregarding standard conventions, this study

maintains the capitalization in imitation of the author and his respect for non-Christian religion.) Non-Christians are not heathens to Kipling; they are the ones who understand the world. Cockshut also notices this tendency in Kipling's writing. He recognizes that "[t]he idolator gets more favourable treatment from Kipling than from almost any other writer of his time" because the author has a deep "contempt for those who dismiss the idol as powerless, and persist in being too 'reasonable' in a world full of dark and terrible mysteries" (*LH* xxii). Characters like Fleete are severely punished for their transgressions, not simply because they offend the religious sensibilities of the native peoples, but because they tamper with powers of which they have no conception.

Kipling does not imply that every unexplainable phenomenon in the Indian world is supernatural, however. He recognizes that, just as there are many charlatans in Christianity, impostors exist in other religions as well. A case in point is the elaborate hoax of Dana Da in the *In Black and White* story "The Sending of Dana Da" (*ST*). Kipling ridicules the over-credulous Englishmen and even calls them members of "the Tea-cup religion of the Simla Creed" (*ST* 145). Nevertheless, Kipling never questions the reality of the Gods. He derides all Westerners who fail to come to terms with Eastern religions because true tolerance can only come with mutual understanding. While Fleete undergoes punishment for lightly dismissing the Gods, the equally ignorant amateur religious scholars

of the Simla Creed fall under censure not because they disbelieve but because they believe without understanding.

By placing a proverb at the beginning of the "Mark of the Beast," "Your Gods and my Gods--do you or I know which are the stronger?" (*LH* 178), Kipling illustrates that conviction in one's own faith does not establish its efficacy over other religions. The only way to determine the strength of one religion against another is to test them both. However, since this epigraph is a native proverb, a Geertzian reading indicates that Christianity is implicitly called into question. In Fleete's case, Christianity fails miserably. For the narrator of "Mark of the Beast," however, there can be no doubt about the reality of Hindu Gods. He begins the story by describing the feelings of some Westerners:

East of Suez, some hold, the direct control of Providence ceases; Man being there handed over to the power of the Gods and Devils of Asia, and the Church of England Providence only exercising an occasional and modified supervision in the case of Englishmen. (*LH* 178)

Religions, thus, have a kind of "sphere of influence" for Kipling--not the universality which Christianity claims. A religion only has its power when situated in a compatible cultural setting. Kipling later emphasizes this viewpoint in *Kim* when the Sahiba and Mahbub Ali come to the same religious conclusion. Mahbub says that "Faiths are like the horses. Each has merit in its own country" (*Kim* 144). Likewise, the Sahiba explains that when she "remembered

[her] own Gods [her] prayers were heard" (*Kim* 69). The narrator of "The Mark of the Beast" holds this opinion and states that he believes the local power of religions may "explain [his] story" (*LH* 178) about Fleete. The Christian God has nothing to do with Fleete's ultimate salvation. Only Strickland, who understands the nature of Hindu curses, can stop Fleete's downward spiral into bestiality--and even then, he must resort to violence and torture so cruel that the narrator refuses to describe it: "This part is not to be printed" (*LH* 189). The narrator implies by this statement that, whenever a reader fails to interpret correctly, misreading which "tortures" the text ensues. Though Strickland's familiarity with Hindu texts is unparalleled in the British world, even he ultimately succumbs to using the text for his own purposes.

Unfortunately, Fleete, so worried about making money that he has never bothered to learn anything substantial about India, rejects the idea that Hinduism has any value. True service-oriented Britons like the narrator, however, seek to understand native culture to be tolerant, even accepting, of Indian beliefs:

Hanuman, the Monkey-god [is] a leading divinity worthy of respect. All gods have good points, just as have all priests. Personally, I attach much importance to Hanuman, and am kind to his people . . . One never knows when one may want a friend. (*LH* 179)

This acceptance of other religions, along with the text of the story, adds force to the necessity of maintaining an ecumenical outlook

toward religions. The satiric concluding sentence emphasizes the close-mindedness of individuals like Fleete: “[I]t is well known to every right-minded man that the Gods of the heathen are stone and brass, and any attempt to deal with them otherwise is justly condemned” (*LH* 191). In fact, the evidence of other-worldly forces far outweighs the dismissal of “heathen” Gods, as the narrator’s refrain indicates: “There are more things [in heaven and earth . . . than are dreamt of in your philosophy]” (*LH* 190).

Strickland hates this phrase and says that it has been “worn threadbare” because he wishes to disbelieve what he has seen happen to Fleete. However, he cannot mistrust his own eyes and continues to think about the incident for years. It is even Strickland’s suggestion, says the narrator, that the story be written down for observation by the British public. Thus, the narrator and Strickland wish the West to understand that it has a great deal to learn about other cultures. The incident represents a vital lesson for Strickland because until this point he has assumed that cultures are easy to read. It turns out that they are easy to misread but very difficult to interpret.

Fleete’s major breech of conduct may condemn him to an incredibly unpleasant experience, but Kipling shows in “The Return of Imray,” another Strickland story, that even ignorance without malice can ruin a Briton unfamiliar with native culture. Imray suffers a much worse fate than Fleete, even though he is innocent of any intention to damage or insult India. Strickland, “a man who

understands things" (*LH* 197), is never overly anxious to admit unqualified virtue in anyone. Yet, even he describes Imray as "guileless and inoffensive" (*LH* 200). The police officer, however, feels little sympathy for the murdered Imray who committed the capital crime of failing to learn about India: "Imray made a mistake. Simply and solely through not knowing the nature of the Oriental" (*LH* 203). Like Mowgli in "Kaa's Hunting," Imray violated one of the basic tenets of the society which he was supposed to serve, and ignorance is no defense. Ignorance itself is the offense.

Although finding Imray's body and discovering the reason for his death shock the narrator, Strickland is not surprised. The murderer, Bahadur Khan, explains in a conversation with Strickland that he killed Imray because he cursed his son with the evil eye. This type of curse actually has nothing to do with eyes or seeing. The evil eye operates like a jinx. When someone unwisely compliments another, the Gods become jealous and revenge themselves upon the flattered person. Imray, not realizing that Indians fear compliments because of the Gods' envy, casts the evil eye upon one of his servant's children. By seeing what he should not, Imray misreads the boy and destroys him, hence, the "evil eye" of misinterpretation. Khan explains that this is reason enough for killing the perpetrator, Imray:

'Walking among us, his servants, he cast his eyes upon my child, who was four years old. Him he bewitched, and in ten days he died of the fever--my child!'

'What said Imray Sahib?'

‘He said he was a handsome child, and patted him on
the head; wherefore my child died. Wherefore I killed Imray
Sahib in the twilight.’ (*LH* 201-202)

Strickland does not believe in the evil eye. However, he recognizes that many in Indian culture hold it to be fact. Although Strickland must arrest Bahadur Khan for murder, he understands and sympathizes with him. Instead of reproving or condemning the murderer for his crime he states that Khan should “have lashed him to the beam with a rope” (*LH* 202). For Strickland and for Bahadur Khan, Imray was more at fault than his own murderer.

When Imray disappeared, everyone believed that he secretly left the country for some dark personal reason which no one had ever been able to uncover: “[w]ithout warning, for no conceivable motive, in his youth, at the threshold of his career he chose to disappear from the world” (*LH* 192). After brief but unfruitful speculation as to the reason for his leaving and of his present whereabouts, “the great Indian Empire swept forward” and Imray “[was forgotten] utterly” (*LH* 193). Months pass and Strickland rents Imray’s former bungalow. He notices both Tietjens’s abnormal behavior and the odd noises around the house. Unable to figure out what these mean, Strickland decides to wait to see if any other “clues” surface. The situation remains unchanged until one day, in the presence of the narrator, he notices several snakes wiggling out from the ceiling-cloth. Disgusted at having serpents overhead, Strickland tears down the cloth, and discovers what appears to be a “buffalo . . . lying on the main roof-

beam" among nests "for owls and serpents" (*LH* 198). Upon closer observation, Strickland realizes that the buffalo is the murdered Imray.

Kipling associates Imray with animals because beasts have an allegorical significance in both Western and Indian cultures. Strickland describes Imray as a buffalo because, while he may have been inoffensive and gentle, he was stupid. He dies as a direct result of his ignorance not only of India but also of those who share his home. Since his body is found between two manifestations of wisdom, the owl and the serpent, Imray's stupid buffalo-nature is his downfall; he can only be educated through his death. Had Imray known enough to follow its example, the owl would have shown him the importance of seeking to understand his surroundings.

Likewise, Imray was unable to see the importance of identifying with the snake. The narrator draws attention to the serpent because it is the key to "The Return of Imray." He explains that "if you look into the eyes of any snake you will see that it knows all and more of the mystery of man's fall, and that it feels all the contempt that the Devil felt when Adam was evicted from Eden" (*LH* 197-98). In both Genesis and "The Return of Imray" the characters die because they transgress a law. While Adam and Eve fall as a result of lifting their ignorance, Imray dies because he sees no need to enlighten himself. Ignorance may be bliss in a pre-lapsarian state, but in a fallen world only those who understand their environment can survive. The *felix culpa* necessitates knowledge to reacquire a beatific state.

After his death, Imray, finding himself between two sources of wisdom, seeks to inform others of his mistake. Strickland and the narrator understand this lesson immediately: "Then we spoke, both together and to ourselves: 'That's why he whispered about the house'" (*LH* 199). Imray haunts his home so that other Britons will learn that the single greatest sin when living in another culture is refusing to learn about it. The narrator, realizing that he may be as complacent as Imray, "shudder[s]" because "[his] own servant had been with [him] for exactly [the same length of time as Imray's]" (*LH* 203). Wishing to test his knowledge, or ignorance, the narrator quizzes his servant and finds that his own servant and all the rest of the household knew and approved of Imray Sahib's death. Imray's demise serves as a warning to anyone in a foreign culture who continues to misread. Some texts fight back in order to punish the misreader.

Imray suffers the greatest punishment possible for his ignorance of native ways of thinking, but, when such ignorance occurs at a governmental level, there are even greater consequences. "The Head of the District" reveals the disaster which results when administrators fail to understand the people they govern. Kipling's motive for demonstrating that natives ruling natives can be detrimental is not that they are incapable of self-government. The narrator is careful to reveal that Dé is an able administrator. However, native populations, through long-cherished prejudices, do not always appreciate seeing one of their own over them. Andrew

Rutherford establishes that Dé's competence is not the point of the story but that any decision that "does not allow for the race-prejudice of the tribesmen of the District concerned" undoes "the work of dedicated officers on the Frontier" (43). The viceroy, by ignoring the actual state of the district, upsets the balance of power. While principles such as self-rule may be appropriate "in season" (*LH* 96), Kipling shows that forcing "enlightenment" upon people is denigrating their culture--even if their beliefs fall under the Western conception of prejudice. The experiment fails because the government refuses to consider the Pathans' reaction to having a Bengali ruler.

When Orde, the last British head of the Kot-Kumharsen District, dies, the Imperial government opts to replace him with a native, who is certainly qualified to fill the position. Mr. Grish Chunder Dé "won his place and a university degree to boot in fair and open competition with the sons of the English. He was cultured, of the world, and, if report spoke truly, sympathetically ruled a crowded district in South-Eastern Bengal" (*LH* 96). Dé has qualities as good as, if not better than, his English counterparts; he is "more English than the English" (*LH* 97). Dé's supplementary nature shows that Indians do not need English supervision. His country is entirely capable of modernizing itself. As a *supplément* to the English, Dé completely replaces British rule. Kipling shows that, contrary to imperialist rhetoric, Indians have the ability to rule themselves and the capacity for choosing their own destinies. In

fact, since Dé is “more English than the English,” he could rule Great Britain more effectively than parliament or the queen. The story shows that Dé would be more comfortable in a British setting than he is in a Pathan province.

However, the ironically named “Very Greatest of All the Viceroy” (*LH* 96) decides that the Pathans should be ruled by Dé. Unfortunately, as Kipling states in his autobiography, such a “principle . . . ends not seldom in bloodshed” (*SM* 31) because it does not consult the governed. If Dé is to rule over natives, he would be better placed in London governing a population he understands. Several critics, including the astute Nirad Chaudhuri, fail to see the critique of the Imperial government in “Head of the District.” The most salient reason, as Chaudhuri admits, is that people are trained to overlook the admirable qualities of natives in Kipling’s work: “I had heard of his ‘imperialism’ and contempt for Bengalis” (47). While Chaudhuri recognizes a premier artist and a man sympathetic to the soul of India, he begins his analysis with hearsay: “I had heard . . .” Because he already has a tainted perspective, Chaudhuri misses Kipling’s point that the viceroy’s principle may be well-intentioned while misguided in its execution.

The viceroy fools himself into believing what he says because Mr. Dé does not receive his appointment solely on the basis of his accomplishments. The viceroy, satirically titled “Very Greatest of All the Viceroys,” has an eye on his own glorification. His plan, stated

as a rhetorical question, is to place a native in charge of a border district:

What [was] more easy to win a reputation for far-seeing statesmanship, originality, and, above all, deference to the desires of the people, than by appointing a child of the country to the rule of that country? Two hundred millions of the most loving and grateful fold under Her Majesty's dominion would laud the fact, and their praise would endure for ever. (*LH 96*)

The viceroy's self-seeking motives and his ignorance of the people under him inform his decision to place Dé in a Pathan area famous for its prejudice against Bengalis. The civil servants who know the area realize that the result will be a racially inspired civil war, and these experts declare that "His Excellency [is] a fool, a dreamer of dreams, a doctrinaire, and, worst of all, a trifler with the lives of men" (*LH 97*). Another revealing aspect of the viceroy's attitude is his insistence that Dé is a child of the soil. Even though the viceroy realizes the Bengali's competence, he refuses to refer to Dé as a man, or even a man of the soil. Therefore, the viceroy and his counterparts not only ignore possible negative repercussions of Dé's appointment but also assume a markedly paternalistic attitude toward even those Indians who have already proven their skills to the government.

Despite objections, the viceroy appoints Dé as head of the Pathan Kot-Kumharsen district. While speaking to another official of the region, Tallantire, the District-Officer and Dé's new second in

command, momentarily breaks down in tears of anger when he hears of the appointment:

How on earth am I to explain to the district that they are going to be governed by a Bengali? Do you--does the Government, I mean--suppose that the Khusru Kheyl will sit quiet when they once know? What will the Mahomedan heads of villages say? How will the police--Muzbi Sikhs and Pathans--how will *they* work under him? We [the English] couldn't say anything if the Government appointed a sweeper; but my people [the Pathans] will say a good deal, you know that. It's a piece of cruel folly! (LH 98)

Tallantire, because he is sensitive to the needs and desires of the people, is deeply disturbed by the news although he never questions Dé's ability as a governor. Tallantire's rhetorical questions illustrate that the viceroy's comments simply represent imperial rhetoric. If both Britons can ask questions which appear to have only one answer (or no answer at all), the people themselves must be allowed to choose their own destinies as well as their own rulers.

Kipling is at his most didactic in "The Head of the District." Although he appreciates, as he shows in "The Amir's Homily," that India will rule itself "long after the English have passed away" (LH 244), Kipling also understands that racial prejudices do not vanish overnight. While the viceroy's principles are founded in benevolence and far-sightedness, he fails to understand the people because of his egotism. The incredibly diverse Indian subcontinent could not be

treated as uniform in Kipling's day, anymore than one can say it is homogeneous today.

The viceroy's action "is the worst of ill-considered handling of a very large country. What looks so feasible in Calcutta, so right in Bombay, so unassailable in Madras, is misunderstood in the North, and entirely changes its complexion on the banks of the Indus" (*LH* 102). By appointing a Bengali as head of a Pathan area, the imperial government in "The Head of the District" feeds the flames instead of subduing them. Instead of installing a child of the soil, the government allows one faction to rule over another. Racial prejudice does not fade in a day, nor even during the terms of several heads of the district. Too many of the region still "faithfully believed that the Bengali was the servant of all Hindustan, and that all Hindustan was vastly inferior to [their] own large, lustful [selves]" (*LH* 101). The viceroy's principle has value in Western eyes, but the people whom it should profit most do not appreciate or want the benefits it provides.

The people of the district are deeply insulted by the appointment and quickly fall in line behind a radical whom they would normally have ignored or driven a "gun butt-first down [his] throat" (*LH* 100). However, the pride of the Pathans has been wounded, and the people readily listen to the ravings of the Blind Mullah when he exclaims that "because [they] listened to Orde Sahib and called him father and behaved as his children, the British Government have proven how they regard [the people of this region]" (*LH* 99). Ironically, the Pathans feel that a Bengali is more alien

than the interloping British. Those still loyal to the British state that only a "Government, smitten with madness, [could] have" (*LH* 100) "sent [them] a pig to show that [they] were dogs" (*LH* 102).

Once the civil war has commenced and towns begin to burn, Dé realizes that he too has been duped by the imperial government. Apprehending his danger, Dé appeals via telegraph to anyone who can "move a bayonet or transfer a terrified man" (*LH* 107). No help can arrive from outside the district, however, and the battle begins. Mr. Dé's brother is assassinated by a Pathan. Imperial troopers subdue the populace, but succumb to blood-lust and massacre the Pathan warriors. The entire area suffers an incredible number of casualties and a great deal of damage from a blockade which imperial troopers set up while repressing the insurgents.

Not all of Kipling's stories teach through negative reinforcement. A great deal of the Indian fiction, one example of which is "The Bridge-Builders" from *The Day's Work*, exhibits positive approaches to dealing with the general populace. The characters who work with the Indian people benefit those they serve and themselves. The chief engineer of the bridge project learns without conflict what the government in "Head of the District" only realized with bloodletting. The British workers who labor to provide infrastructure, not for personal gain but for the good of the people, receive the advantage of a poly-cultural outlook on the world. By modernizing India, British workers gain a greater understanding of

humanity--and themselves. Work is the most unifying factor in poly-cultural settings.

As Findlayson completes the bridge over the Ganges in "The Bridge-Builders," hundreds of white, half-caste, and native workers unite for the common goal of erecting a railway structure which will further unify India. While Findlayson and his assistant, Hitchcock, are the masterminds behind the engineering of the project, the most important element in the actual construction is a Lascar named Peroo. Findlayson often asks Peroo's advice concerning the structural integrity of the bridge: "Peroo, thou hast been up and down the world more even than I. Speak true talk, now. How much dost thou in thy heart believe of Mother Gunga [what is she capable of]?" (*DW* 11). The narrator explains that Peroo has a technical "knowledge of tackle and the handling of heavy weights" so superior that he "was worth almost any price he might have chosen to put upon his services" (*DW* 8). Peroo is so valuable to the project that neither of the Englishmen ever considers replacing him with another European because "there was no one like Peroo" (*DW* 9).

Helen Pike Bauer, in her study of several short stories, focuses on the image of the bridge as an instrument for maintaining control over India. She recognizes the reality of the Gods in the story but concludes that, while "the gods are not denied," they are distanced from both Findlayson and the reader (21). However, "The Bridge-Builders" ends with Peroo's explicit and Findlayson's implicit contemplation of the Hindu faith. Because of this pervasive Hindu

element in the story, the bridge in the story can also be seen as connecting Indian and British cultures. Thus, the bridge stands as a symbol for what cultures can accomplish when they come together for the betterment of all. In this view, the actual structure over the Ganges is of secondary importance. S. T. Sharma, an Indian critic, in a sophisticated analysis of four stories from *The Day's Work*, concurs. Sharma explains that the "synod" on the island clarifies the significance of the bridge. By working together for the good of India, Findlayson and Peroo build a "bridge between Britain and India, between Western and Eastern cultures and explores the age old Indian philosophy [Hindu religion] and its relevance to the modern context" (59). Though this study downplays the character of Peroo, Sharma embraces the importance of the spiritual bridge and India's participation in its construction. Similarly, Nirad Chaudhuri realizes the importance of spirituality. He explains that "living in India, [Kipling] had also become half a *butparast*, idol-worshipper, and it was out of his *butparasti*, idolatry, that he created the amazing *panchayat* or conclave of the gods in the story of *The Bridge-builders*" (52). Chaudhuri's essay clarifies Kipling's personal implication in this particular story. Kipling himself represents the spiritual and cultural bridging between Britain and India.

Because they commit themselves to bringing together East and West, Findlayson and Hitchcock represent all that is good and noble to Kipling. They are expert at their work and respect those who labor under them. They are true poly-culturalists who treat their fellow

expert, Peroo, with the same respect they show to each other. Even though there is a serious language barrier between the Englishmen and Peroo, none of the trio evidences any negative racial attitudes. In fact Peroo, in his invaluable position as overseer of construction, “would interrupt the field-councils of Findlayson and Hitchcock without fear, till his wonderful English, or his still more wonderful *lingua-franca*, half Portuguese and half Malay, ran out and he was forced to take string and show the knots that he would recommend” (DW 9). Findlayson is perpetually solicitous of Peroo’s safety because “his was no life to throw away” (DW 10). No Englishman can equal him, and the British engineer respects the fact that Peroo is a bridge between the engineers and India. Actually, Peroo is even more than a bridge between Findlayson and the workers. By acting as a supplement to the chief engineer, the Hindu symbolizes the commonality of, or the bridges between, all languages and cultures of which Hindi, English, Portuguese, and Malay are representative.

The only obstacle preventing a complete meeting of minds between Findlayson and Peroo is Peroo’s steadfast clinging to Hinduism. Findlayson’s religion resides firmly in “rough drawings and formulæ” (DW 12). However, Peroo’s religious prophecy, that Gungā will attempt to destroy the bridge, proves to be true. The bulk of “The Bridge-Builders” takes place on an island where Peroo and Findlayson witness a council of the principal Gods of the Hindu pantheon. This episode breaks down the final barrier which the already admirable Findlayson has between himself and native

culture. He finds himself in a position where he must accept the reality of the Gods. With Peroo, Findlayson witnesses the synod of the Gods and listens intently to their discussion concerning the British presence in India. At first the Briton cannot bring himself to accept the reality of what he sees. Eventually, he comes to recognize that Hinduism's Gods are not mythic and asks, "What have the Gods to do with my bridge?" (*DW* 24). Eavesdropping on the synod teaches Findlayson that the greatest aspect of his work is not the promotion he will receive but the benefit his work will provide Indians and the propagation of their culture.

As the deliberations of the Gods' council shift from the presence of the bridge spanning the Ganges to the influence the British have had in unifying India, it becomes clear that the Empire has unknowingly served Hindu religion. The advances in medicine, transportation, and architecture serve to modernize the subcontinent and to strengthen Hindu religion. Several of the Gods cite increased participation at religious ceremonies because of more numerous and more accessible shrines. The train is very popular because it binds the people into a more coherent unit and increases the number of pilgrimages. Hanuman also explains that the Westerners unwittingly worship Hindu Gods. While the modernization of India causes Indians to praise their Gods for added comforts, the British "believe that their God is toil [and Hanuman] run[s] before them beckoning, and they follow Hanuman" (*DW* 28). Findlayson, by having shared his power with Indian professionals, recognizes that he is one of

these new, imported followers of Hanuman and realizes the final superiority of Indian religion over his own techno-religion.

As evidenced in "The Bridge-Builders," Kipling's "pagan vision" (Eliot 33) sees the inter-cultural communication as aiding the propagation of indigenous religion. The efforts of the fictional empire to modernize India and improve the standard of living for its inhabitants always receive the most glowing treatment from Kipling. However, the West also gains invaluable insight into its own weaknesses and acquires the possibility of strengthening its own culture through contact with Indian diversity. Kipling's philosophy, unlike the practices of the British Raj, resembles service more than imperialism and promotes unity through diversity by forging a new world of equality through mutual respect and modernization.

Chapter Three

The Benefits of Amalgamating Cultures

In *Kim*, the only novel in the Indian fiction, Kipling creates an idyllic India, a place where people of all faiths, languages, and occupations seek, or should seek, the common good. This work holds an elevated place in the Kipling canon because it is also the last piece written during his Indian period. It therefore represents the author's final artistic thoughts on cultural diversity and the end of his writing about his idea of a utopic, fictional India.

Those characters who do intrude upon this utopian and ecumenical majesty, like the Russian spies, become comical in their repulsiveness, and India maintains its tranquillity with hardly a ripple of anxiety from the threat. With all India unified against threats from the outside, service becomes a common discourse through which all people are able to share their cultures with others. The most attractive people in the Kipling's writing are those who acquire, and continue to seek, knowledge of the "other." These characters do their best to read other cultures and religions, and by so doing, foster a spirit of tolerance and ecumenism, which results in an amalgamation of cultures, and finally, enlightenment. In effect,

for Kipling, his fictional world is a mechanism, a common discourse, through which a global community comes into being. Empire, thus, is the starting point from which he builds the cultural collage he believes the future to hold. This kaleidoscope of cultures represents a world in which all nations exist in community through sharing technological advances and supporting attitudes of tolerance. Kipling represents what he sees as the beneficial nature of cultural interaction by elaborately portraying the benefits which each culture supplies the other, by stressing religious and cultural tolerance as a means to unity, and by depicting the strength which a combination of cultures provides the individual.

Kipling's belief in the benefits of "traffic between cultures" becomes readily apparent in "The Miracle of Purun Bhagat." Islam affirms that Kipling's admiration for Indian culture, through the figure of Purun Dass, is all-encompassing (40). At the same time, his ambivalence towards British imperialism in the sub-continent shows itself. In this short story from *The Second Jungle Book*, the protagonist Purun Dass, realizing that the British have, for good or ill, taken control of his country, seeks to "imitate all that the English believed to be good" because "the old order of things was changing" (JB 168). An Orientalist critic would claim this sentiment proves "Indians are particularly 'contemned' as incompetent apers of the English" (Williams 37).

Dass's pro-British stance, to the Orientalist, exhibits Kipling's endorsement of the subjugation of native culture in preference to

Britain's: the colonizer has so indoctrinated Dass that he is willing to forsake his own culture. Dass writes to the British-run newspapers explaining the plans his master (the Maharajah) has for the country. These programs for the future have a pro-Western attitude to them, the implication being that Indians have a great deal to learn from their foreign rulers. Therefore, British imperialism is benevolent, and the oppressed should be thankful for their subjection. Dass is a collaborator, an enemy to his own culture.

But this "collaborator" is an interesting one; he does not fit the Orientalist stereotype. He may present a pro-West agenda for the future, but he also feels tainted by contact with the British. When he returns from a trip to Great Britain, he immediately goes to the Hindu priests for spiritual cleansing. This costs him "enormous sums of money" (*JB* 169). Although the trip is necessary for the advancement of his country, Dass does not make excuses that would exempt him from the laws of his own religion. If he were truly a counterfeit Briton, he would choose to subscribe, for appearance's sake, to the official religion of Great Britain. He does neither of these, but instead goes to the priests, and eventually chooses the life of a beggar, the antithesis of Western aspiration. In the conclusion of the story, Dass reaches enlightenment while saving his villagers. He accomplishes this feat not only because he is a dedicated and pious Hindu but also because he is "Sir Purun Dass, K. C. I. E., Prime Minister of no small State, a man accustomed to command, going out to save life" (*JB* 179). Rather than being a yes-man to the

oppressor, Dass represents Kipling's ideal of empire, an amalgamation of cultures. Though Dass chooses the life of a holy man, he rejects neither the British culture he has acquired nor the Indian culture he has inherited.

By combining the best of British culture with his own, Purun Dass is able to modernize his country while maintaining its integrity. With the aid of Western technology, Dass and his Maharajah "established schools for little girls, made roads, and started State dispensaries and shows of agricultural implements" and "endow[ed] scholarships for the study of medicine and manufacture" (*JB* 169). Dass's programs, modeled upon British examples, improve his people's lives and bring about a friendship between India and the West. By showing "that what is good for the Englishman must be twice as good for the Asiatic" (*JB* 169), Dass prepares his "semi-independent native State" (*JB* 168) for total independence. He realizes that the British will not leave until India appears to operate like a Western state.

Despite George Orwell's assertion that Kipling is a spokesman for the colonialists and a racist of his time (75), many critics who agree with this assessment break with Orwell over the value of the writer's work. For example, Nirad Chaudhuri observes that, "quite a large number of [Kipling's] themes are drawn from what might legitimately be called political life, but these have been personalised and transformed into equally legitimate artistic themes" (48). Chaudhuri, recognizing that Kipling's art bears only a superficial

resemblance to any form of colonial politics, declares *Kim* "irresistible" (53) and "not only the finest novel in the English language with an Indian theme, but also one of the greatest English novels in spite of the theme" (47).

Since Chaudhuri's time, more critics are finding that Kipling subverts imperialism more than Orwell believes. The result is that, at the gateway to the twenty-first century, the myth of the negative Kipling is beginning to fade. For example, Ann Parry, in her work on "The Bridge-Builders," reveals that Kipling "advances the Indian at the expense of the Imperialist, and within the reversal there is . . . an implicit comment on the future of the Raj" (17). Parry concludes that the prophet of imperialism actually indicates that "India . . . is becoming a nation, shedding its ancient past; and in doing so is accommodating itself to the technology introduced by the Imperialists; and all of these factors are undermining the Raj" (21). Critics like Parry recognize his progressive point of view.

Parry explains that Kipling understood that native states did not need foreign rule. She then details how Kipling's work portrays India's move toward complete independence, as Prime Minister Dass does by leaving his governmental post and returning to the native condition of holy man. He, in effect, liberates himself from the control of the Imperial government. As a symbol of India's growing knowledge of its own self-worth in spite of British assertions to the contrary, Dass reasserts his autonomy as a Hindu: "[n]ow he would let these things go, as a man drops the cloak he no longer needs"

(*JB* 170). Purun Dass, renamed Purun Bhagat, becomes India with his departure. He personifies "the Old Law" of Hinduism (*JB* 170), but even so, his contact with the British continues to temper his world-view. Though he has become a Hindu holy man, Dass expects no preferential treatment from the secularized government: when "a native Mohammedan policeman told him he was obstructing traffic . . . Purun Dass salaamed reverently to the Law, because he knew the value of it" (*JB* 172). Dass takes the best of British culture while maintaining his own integrity as an Indian and a Hindu.

Hindu people in "The Miracle of Purun Bhagat" react positively to the amalgamated culture of Dass. For example, when the holy man chooses a shrine to inhabit, Bhagat's bearing particularly impresses the neighboring villagers. During the priest's first encounter with the Bhagat, he immediately recognizes the power which the combination of cultures creates in the former prime minister: "When he met Purun Bhagat's eyes--the eyes of a man used to control thousands--he bowed to the earth, took the begging-bowl without a word, and returned to the village, saying, 'We have at last a holy man'" (*JB* 173). The priest's instant respect comes from the power of Dass's eyes, which contain a reflection of his doubled cultural status. Dass leaves his governmental post to assert his independence from British control, but the people instinctively recognize his holiness by the authority that still invests his person.

Significantly, upon Dass's death, the Indians revere the integration of their culture with that of the English. They build a

shrine commemorating this fusion and leave Kali's shrine (dedicated as protection from Britain and its imported diseases like small pox) buried in the mudslide. India, by reverencing the dual culture of Bhagat, shows that it can build a new tradition with the best of both East and West. Each culture supplements the other, and when combined in the person of Sir Purun Dass, the two form an ideal mega-culture similar to Kimball O'Hara's in *Kim*. The past and the future, ancient Hinduism and modernization, reside in the little stone and earth shrine dedicated to the holy man.

While "The Miracle of Purun Bhagat" deals mainly with the interplay between Hinduism and the modernization of the subcontinent, *Kim*'s treatment of Eastern religion is more thorough. Almost every chapter heading of *Kim* pleads with the Western reader for religious tolerance and points to the common humanity which all religions serve. The first three chapters each begin with an excerpt from "The Buddha at Kamakura," one of Kipling's own poems which begs Christians to respect the faiths of other people. The epigraphs of chapters one and two ask that Westerners to "Be gentle when the heathen pray / To Buddha at Kamakura" (*Kim* 1) because

. . . whoso will, from Pride released,
 Contemning neither man nor beast,
 May hear the Soul of all the East
 About him at Kamakura. (*Kim* 26)

Seeing beauty does not mean that he sees perfection. Kipling discerns injustices in every religion he encounters and incorporates

his observations into *Kim*. Williams notices some of this critique in Kipling's treatment of Hinduism and takes it for a "damning depiction of Indians" (37). However, *Kim* condemns the negative aspects of Hinduism because of their resemblance to Christianity, a religion whose "Gods are lies" (*Kim* 264). For example, when Kim and his Lama meet with the Sahiba, one of her servants is "acutely aware of [Brahmins'] cunning and greed" (*Kim* 76). This phrase does not apply to all Brahmins because, at this point in the story, Kim and his master have just left the Umballa Brahmin's home, and that man is the epitome of hospitality and generosity. Kipling does not portray the entire system as corrupt, but true to life, shows that there are always individuals who abuse their authority. While Williams concedes that "Christianity may be a debased thing in Kipling's eyes," he goes on to say that "the corresponding idea of a white man becoming a Hindu or Buddhist . . . is unthinkable" (39). Williams overlooks that Kim, as a disciple of Teshoo Lama, does become a Buddhist and reaches enlightenment through its teachings.

Whereas Christianity in general may be a debased thing, even this rule fails to hold completely. The character of Father Victor is admirable even if Roman Catholicism seems comical at times. The Church of England through its representative, the bigoted and intolerant Mr. Bennett, evidences no genuine concern for either Kim or the Lama, but the Catholic priest reveals a deep-seated empathy for the feelings of Kim's Lama. Even the repulsive Bennett respects the humanity of the priest, if not the religion:

Between himself and the Roman Catholic chaplain of the Irish contingent lay, as Bennett believed, an unbridgeable gulf, but it was noticeable that whenever the Church of England dealt with a human problem she was very likely to call in the Church of Rome. Bennett's official abhorrence of the Scarlet Woman and all her ways was only equalled by his private respect for Father Victor. (*Kim* 85)

The Anglican chaplain cannot follow the example of his Catholic counterpart and continues to look "with the triple-ringed uninterest of the creed that lumps nine-tenths of the world under the title of 'heathen'" (*Kim* 88). Bennett's attitude towards other religions stems from his fundamental unconcern for religion--even his own. When the regiment heads to the frontier for battle, Colonel Creighton observes that Bennett will be content with "[g]lory, leaving [Father Victor] the religion" (*Kim* 112).

Kipling's ambivalence toward Christianity is countered by the esteem which he holds for Eastern religions. One of the most startling instances of Eastern religions' efficacy is Kim and the Lama's encounter with the cobra. Kim, deathly afraid of snakes, attempts to break the cobra's back. However, the Lama rebukes him saying, "He is upon the Wheel as we are--a life ascending or descending--very far from deliverance" (*Kim* 43). The incredulous Kim watches as his mentor addresses the serpent: "May thy release come soon, brother . . . Hast *thou* knowledge, by chance, of my River?" (*Kim* 43). Although the snake has its hood open and is ready to strike,

this speech pacifies it. The cobra “flattened itself among the dusty coils” (*Kim* 44) as the Lama walks within a foot of it. Even Kim's sudden movement afterwards, which such an animal would interpret as a threat, evokes no response.

According to the Judeo-Christian creation myth, the serpent is the instrument of mankind's fall. Kipling points this out through Kim's response. Although completely “native” in education, Kim experiences the fear one expects a Westerner to feel. The narrator, commenting on this grain of Christian superstition, says, “[N]o native training can quench the white man's horror of the Serpent” (*Kim* 43). The Lama may not have any knowledge of the Western tradition, but his actions explicitly deny the malignancy of the snake and, therefore, the myths of Christianity. The image of the wheel expresses the idea that there is a kinship between the human world and that of animals and gives new meaning to the expression “all one.” The spiritual world, thus, is not the hierarchical construct which the West emulates. It functions as a wheel, many equal parts, each counterbalancing the rest.

The episode with the serpent reveals that creation is not necessarily structured top-down and does not mean that Western culture is superior. The Lama explains during a later lesson that the “Sahibs have not *all* this world's wisdom” (*Kim* 192, emphasis in text). Kipling, through the Lama, tutors the reader in the validity of other religions. To fall into the same behavior patterns as Mr.

Bennett is fatal to ecumenism. Other religions are not simply superstitions.

Another episode with the Lama serves to emphasize Kipling's point that Eastern religions deserve respect. When one of the Russian spies strikes Teshoo Lama across the face and tears the world-chart, the action prompts the holy man to anger. He says that he even desires the blood of those who have insulted him. However, he recites the Buddhist Beatitudes and restores his equilibrium. The undue passion which the Russian threat excites in him causes him to swerve from the path of enlightenment. Although the Lama, once he returns to his placid state, understands his transgression and does not need a sign, he receives one anyway. The chart, torn in half by the violence of the Russian "idolator," serves to show the backwardness of anger: "From left to right diagonally the rent ran--from the Eleventh House where Desire gives birth to the Child (as it is drawn by Tibetans)--across the human and animal worlds, to the Fifth House--the empty House of the Senses" (*Kim* 262). When the Lama expounds upon the meaning of the sign, awestruck, Kim listens and finally recognizes that the "logic was unanswerable" (*Kim* 262). As Kim becomes more familiar with the beliefs of the Lama, he learns, like Geertz's anthropologists, to respect his local knowledge and finally recognizes the "logic" of the old man's culture.

Whereas most religions claim that murder in self-defense is acceptable, the Buddhism of the Lama does not. The Lama believes that self-defense is a form of "revenge," and the desire to protect

oneself is enough to taint the individual. The sign serves to exemplify that wishing for retribution degrades the person so far that one falls below the level of the animal. According to this view, by giving vent to his anger, the Lama momentarily becomes less than the serpent he pacifies at the beginning of the novel. This experience is enough to humble the already unassuming Lama. However, the efficacy of his religion provides the sign of the torn Wheel so that he may more convincingly teach his disciple what he already understands.

Kim is the only reason that a sign is needed. The Lama comprehends the nature of the transgression. However, the West cannot grasp the reality of the world as it really is. Just as Kim irrationally fears the fellow-soul because it is in the form of the snake, so does he fail to apprehend the meaning behind the incident with the Russians. The East, recognizing the truth of its own beliefs, has no need for signs for reinforcement. Kim, embodying Western values at this point, must receive instruction with adequate proofs. For the West, seeing is believing.

While the Lama exemplifies the need for the West to recognize the validity of the Buddhist world-view, the Hindu interpretation of Kim's "prophecy" reinforces that other Eastern religions also see the world as it really is. According to Kipling, the West wrongly dismisses astrology as superstition. Before his father died, Kim received what he thought was a prophecy from him: "Nine hundred first-class devils, whose god was a Red Bell on a green field, would

attend to Kim" (*Kim* 2) "but first there will enter two men making things ready" (*Kim* 40). Not understanding that his father was referring to his own British regiment, Kim seeks the interpretation of a Brahmin. Consulting the stars the Hindu priest declares: "Thus say the stars. Within three days come the two men to make all things ready. After them follows the Bull; but the sign over against him is the sign of War and armed men . . . Thine is a red and an angry sign of War to be loosed very soon" (*Kim* 40). The astrological reading of the Brahmin comes true to the letter. Both Kim and the Lama watch spellbound as all the Brahmin's predictions occur:

[M]y horoscope! The drawing in the dust by the priest at Umballa! Remember what he said. First come two--
ferashes--to make all things ready . . . And after them comes the Bull--the Red Bull on the green field. Look! It is he! He pointed to the flag that was snap-snapping in the evening breeze not ten feet away. It was no more than an ordinary camp marking-flag . . . the great Red Bull on a background of Irish green. (*Kim* 80)

The veracity of astrological predictions emphasizes that neither the Sahibs, nor the West, have access to all the knowledge in the universe. Characters like Fleete in "The Mark of the Beast" denigrate not only the religious traditions of the West, but they also deny the validity of creeds with which they have little or no familiarity. This scene stresses that reason cannot explain how the Umballa Brahmin

accurately predicts Kim's future. Only faith, the faith of Eastern religions, can account for it.

The "religion of technology" motif is far from dominant in *Kim* because, unlike much of the Indian fiction, this novel operates from a series of markedly Indian world-views. Technology worship tends to be a distinctly Western bias. Respect for British technology, however, manifests itself through images of rapid transit in *Kim*. In the modern world, mobility is essential to such diverse social needs as commerce, information exchange, and the building of national identity. As submerged as Western technology is in *Kim*, it plays an integral part in the action of the novel because it extends the natural inclination for diversity. It makes cultural tolerance a necessity, not simply a luxury.

Perhaps the most conspicuous benefit to the peoples of India during British rule was the vast improvement in transportation. In *Kim*, the benefits of the rail and of the road systems are especially conspicuous. Kipling feels that enhanced mobility is the most important British contribution to the subcontinent. The necessity of rapid movement surfaces in such masterful stories as "The Bridge-Builders" and "William the Conqueror" (DW). Such improvements as intricate systems of roads and the locomotive bind remote parts of India together and not only to prevent strife but also to counter disaster. "William the Conqueror" illustrates the rapidity with which famine and plague can be contained and countered. But even barring emergencies, the locomotive, or "te-rain" as it is called in *Kim*,

creates a situation in which Indians can travel safely and inexpensively. In the Indian fiction, the people of the subcontinent so readily take to this development that the Wonder House Sahib that exclaims that "the mixture of old-world piety and modern progress that is the note of India to-day" is the mark of India's greatness (*Kim* 11). The train, as it is portrayed in stories like "The Bridge-Builders" and *Kim*, is an instrument which can promote the many creeds of the people by allowing them quick and economical transportation to the holy sites of their faiths.

Although the taxes which help subsidize the railways represent an additional burden on the people, the benefits of the train far outweigh the extra expense because Kipling has purged his fictional world of commercial interests. In *Kim*, a Jat concerned for his sick child speaks the mind of every traveler: "in the name of the Gods, let us take the fire-carriage . . . The Government has brought on us many taxes, but it gives us one good thing--the *te-rain* that joins friends and unites the anxious. A wonderful matter is the *te-rain*" (*Kim* 197). Education concerning the system is so good in Kipling's world, and the system is so self-explanatory that even foreigners like the Lama readily understand how to use it. When asked if he knows how to reach his destination, Teshoo Lama replies "for that one but asks a question and pays money, and the appointed persons despatch all to the appointed place. That much I knew in my lamassery from sure report" (*Kim* 11).

In *Kim*, the non-Western individual can harness the mobility which the train provides because the people's needs supply the basis for scheduling and stops. The narrator of *Kim* explains that "[a]ll hours of the twenty-four are alike to Orientals, and their passenger traffic is regulated accordingly" (*Kim* 26). The train functions well in India because the fictional British government allows native people to integrate it into their own culture. Rather than enforcing a standard European departure and arrival schedule, *Kim*'s idealized government is far-sighted enough to let the passengers dictate the traffic flow. A Sikh, so impressed with the way the railways deal with Indians exultantly exclaims to Teshoo Lama, whom the massive size of the steam engine intimidates, "Enter! This thing is the work of the Government" (*Kim* 27).

The train also helps to break down barriers between native peoples at the same time it promotes more chances for cultural understanding between the East and West. As Kim and the Lama travel to Umballa, they meet Jats, Sikhs, and Hindus. Without the "convention" of the train, these people from different castes could not otherwise remain near each other. Several of the people in Kim's car are hereditary enemies, but technology, represented by the train, which all castes and creeds use, allows everyone to respect the "other."

The convention of tolerance inspired by the rail system causes riders to modify potentially offensive behavior. For example, although Dogra and Sikh are mutually antagonistic castes, the

Dogra soldier refrains from openly insulting the Sikh in the same car: "‘Let thy hair grow long and talk Punjabi,’ said the young soldier jestingly to Kim, quoting a Northern proverb. ‘That is all that makes a Sikh.’ *But he did not say this very loud*" (*Kim* 33, emphasis added). While the soldier’s derogatory comment illustrates the proverbial nature of class hatred and racial bigotry, the train allows Sikh and Dogra to coexist peacefully despite their unaccustomed contact. The emphasized portion of the quotation reveals that tensions still exist in Indian society. However, technology naturally breaks down barriers. In order to reap the benefits of inexpensive and rapid transportation, prejudices like those of the Dogra soldier must be laid aside, or at the very least heavily monitored.

Even though Kipling lauds the elimination of prejudicial behavior, he also realizes that the train can be incompatible with Indian beliefs. The train may silence bigotry, but it also damages the caste system which is a fundamental element in Hinduism. Kipling does not seem to understand that the benefits of the "te-rain" are a side effect of the real reason for their construction: the Raj’s need to move soldiers and acquire India’s wealth for Britain. However, Kipling does manage to refrain from being completely unrealistic in his glorification of technology; he shows that the rail systems are not uniformly beneficial to Indian culture. For example, a Hindu complains that "there is not one rule of right living which these *te-rains* do not cause us to break. We sit, for example, side by side with all castes and people" (*Kim* 28). Aware that technology reconfigures

culture and religion at the same time it improves living standards, Kipling illustrates how the people could establish their relationship to it. Far from simply glorifying the technology Kipling often praises, *Kim* presents the debate in which a society with a strict caste system must participate. The people must decide what the role of technology will be in their lives.

Although the Hindu is upset by the mixing of caste on the train, he and his wife feel that the advantages outweigh the drawbacks. When discussing their decision to travel by train, the wife explains that they would have had to spend “twice over what [they] saved on food” (*Kim* 28) through a similar trek following the road. These examples indicate that Kipling is aware that Indians themselves must judge between the rigidity of their caste and the convenience of modern transportation. Of course, Kipling believes that many, like those in this scene, will select the train even if they have had no choice in the construction of the rail-system.

The road has also been improved through British intervention. When Kim and the Lama leave the train, they decide to search for the River of Healing on foot. This project brings them to the Grand Trunk Road. The native cavalry officer, the old Ressaldar Sahib, who befriends Kim and his master describes the road as “all the world coming and going” because “[a]ll castes and kinds of men move here” (*Kim* 57). The narrator continues in the Ressaldar’s description stating that “truly the Grand Trunk Road is a wonderful spectacle. It runs straight, bearing without crowding India’s traffic for fifteen

hundred miles--such a river of life as nowhere else exists in the world" (*Kim* 57).

Just as people of all castes ride the trains in *Kim*, the mixture of East and West creates a situation where people become more mobile and are, therefore, more likely to drop traditional prejudices. For example, although Kim and the Lama rarely travel in predominantly Buddhist areas, no one except the Russian spies intentionally treats Teshoo Lama with disrespect. Throughout India people revere holy men, regardless of creed. When Kim begs for his master, the duo always receives the best people have to offer. Even when their pilgrimage takes them to the hills, the "woman of ill-omen" (*Kim* 265), the disillusioned Lispeth from the short-story which bears her name, provides Kim and the Lama not only with food but also money and several husbands to carry the exhausted Lama on a litter.

Despite the toxicity of culture fusion in her case, Lispeth upholds the benevolent customs of India. Although she has been mistreated by the Chaplain's wife and the Englishman, Lispeth, now the Woman of Shamlegh, treats the mendicants well. Of course, she also recites the story of her past abuse and explains how it has caused her to become an atheist:

"There are no Gods under all the heavens. I know it....But for awhile I thought it was my Sahib come back, and he was my God. Yes, once I made music on a *pianno* in the Mission-house at Kotgarh. Now I give alms to priests who

are *heatthen*.' She wound up with the English word, and tied the mouth of the brimming bag. (*Kim* 264)

Even in such an extreme case as the Woman of Shamlegh, who has suffered at the hands of religious people, she willingly, if not cheerfully, donates whatever resources are available toward the succor of Kim and the Lama. Because fostering religious sensibilities conflicts with her own beliefs, the Lama proclaims that "[s]he has acquired merit beyond all others" (*Kim* 266). The Lama's pronouncement emphasizes the affliction which toleration of others produces in her. Clearly, she is not a "fallen woman" (Said, Introduction 17). She is a self-immolating model of virtue and a reproach to the British who talk about Christian charity but refuse to practice it.

In spite of the tensions between East and West in India, Kipling believes that the combination of the subcontinent's natural diversity and modern technology nurtures religious and cultural tolerance by creating a respect for the other. *Kim* begins with Kimball O'Hara playing "king-of-the-castle" (*Kim* 3) with Hindu and Muslim boys. The game takes place on the Zam-Zammah, an ancient bronze cannon, now a museum piece outside the Lahore Wonder House. The Zam-Zammah, a symbol of violent imperialism presumably dating back to the Hindu conquests of the subcontinent, is silenced, and children of different races play together in peace.

This amity not only allows the diverse population to practice tolerance but also creates a situation where East and West can "[eat]

from the same dish" (*Kim* 3). Unlike the actual state of affairs in the Raj, Kipling destroys the racial barriers between Kim and the people with whom he has contact. Although Kim identifies with the most recent conquerors, stating to his playmates that "[a]ll Mussalmans fell off Zam-Zammah long ago" and "[t]he Hindus fell off Zam-Zammah too. The Mussalmans pushed them off" (*Kim* 4), the Irish boy treats his fellows as equals: "[h]e consorted on terms of perfect equality with the [other children]" (*Kim* 1). Kim's colonial attitude exists only for the purpose of the children's game.

When he first meets the Lama, Kim is very careful not to offend him by giving an inappropriate title: "Kim gave him no title--such as Lala or Mian. He could not divine the man's creed" (*Kim* 5). Even with his European ancestry, he does not take the conqueror's claims seriously and respects everyone with whom he comes in contact. Kim, therefore, represents a new generation, or more precisely, what Kipling sees as the future relationship between Britain and India. Despite the present subject status of Indians, the future will bring with it the equality of all races.

Nor is Kim the only one capable of seeing equality between the British rulers and Indian peoples in Kipling's fictional universe. When the Sahiba's caravan encounters a District Superintendent of Police, the Englishman approaches her with the deference befitting equals. The bantering of the two is in the spirit of friendly jest of which only peers are capable:

'O mother,' he cried, 'do they do this in the *zenanas*? Suppose an Englishman came by and saw that thou hadst no nose?'

'What?' she shrilled back. 'Thy own mother has no nose? Why say so, then, on the open road?'

It was a fair counter. The Englishman threw up his hand with the gesture of a man hit at sword-play. She laughed and nodded.

'Is this a face to tempt virtue aside?' She withdrew all her veil and stared at him.

It was by no means lovely, but as the man gathered up his reins he called it a Moon of Paradise, a Disturber of Integrity, and a few other fantastic epithets which doubled her up with mirth. (*Kim* 75)

After referring to her as a "Dispenser of Delights" (*Kim* 76), the Englishman departs. The possibility of people of different races interacting as equals is not simply a possibility, but a present reality with the Englishman and the elderly Sahiba. Significantly, they address each other in the familiar form of the language, "thou" and "thy" serving as stand-ins for the Hindustani familiar. Neither of the rivals in the sportive game of jest refers to, or seems to care about, racial difference. They are fellow citizens.

No one would claim that complete impartiality was actually the case in Imperial India. However, as Islam indicates, Kipling does not write about Empire as it is, but as it should be (4). The Sahiba

clarifies the reason for the potentiality of such exchanges to occur: 'They know the land and the customs of the land. The others, all new from Europe, suckled by white women and learning our tongues from books, are worse than the pestilence' (*Kim* 76). To rephrase the Sahiba's words in terms of Geertzian anthropology, those who are intimate with the local knowledge of the land communicate with others as citizens, not as judgmental outsiders.

Said explains that the Sahiba's speech represents "the way European imperialism made itself more palatable to itself" because it emphasizes the "backward or degenerate nature of native society" (Introduction 28). While Said is correct in his observation that British imperialism justified itself in this manner, the Sahiba does not laud colonial rule even though she speaks of the British rulers. What she appreciates is the respect which the policeman shows her because he was raised by an Indian woman. No one in authority, regardless of race or origin, can be an effective governor without knowing the people.

In a situation similar to the Superintendent of Police's conversation with the Sahiba, Teshoo Lama receives the utmost respect from the Sahib of the Wonder House. While the policeman, following the Hindu convention of addressing an older woman, calls the Sahiba "mother," the curator of the Lahore museum consistently addresses the Lama as "brother." By employing familial terms when speaking with their non-Western peers, these two Englishmen explicitly deny any form of racial or cultural superiority. They

emphasize the common humanity of all people. However, without contact with the other to familiarize one with another's local knowledge, as the Sahiba explains after her encounter with the policeman, there is no possibility of understanding nor of true respect.

Because the Wonder House Sahib understands and respects the cultures with which he works every day, he expresses incomparable concern for those who wish to explore the history behind their own religion. Where gaps exist in the statuary, he supplies the missing details so that the Lama will leave the building with as complete a knowledge as is possible. The learning contained in the museum is so extensive that there is even a photograph of the Lama's own lamassery. Teshoo Lama, never too eager to praise, recognizes the extent of the curator's knowledge and titles him "Fountain of Wisdom" (*Kim* 9) and later explains to Kim that "the Keeper of the Images in the Wonder House was in past life a very wise abbot" (*Kim* 270). The feeling, however, is mutual. While the Sahib's knowledge comes from the books and artifacts of the Wonder House, the Lama's memory stretches back centuries, a fact greatly appreciated by the Englishman.

There is a gap in the learning of both men. Neither knows where the River of Healing is located. Because the Englishman's scholarship is so extensive, Teshoo Lama, at first, assumes that he is hiding the location of the river. They both desperately wish to know how to find it, and the Lama, realizing that his counterpart is in

tears because he really does not know the river's location, comforts the devastated Englishman. In return, the curator reinforces their brotherhood. He seeks to "acquire merit" (*Kim* 11) by inquiring if he can supply his companion with any money. Finding that the Lama has no need of this type of charity, the curator gives him paper, pencils, and his own eye-glasses to replace the badly scratched and damaged pair his friend must use. The Buddhist priest, upon his departure, reciprocates the Englishman's hospitality by accepting the gift "as a sign of friendship between priest and priest" (*Kim* 12). He then offers to return after he has "found the River" (*Kim* 12).

Given time, the mutual respect which characters employ in encounters with each other blooms into a deeper kind of friendship, love. Kim's devotion for his Lama is so great that he willingly sacrifices his other love, the Great Game of spies. When the Lama asks, "Chela, hast thou never a wish to leave me?" Kim answers mentally with the thought that "[i]f some one duly authorized would only take delivery of [the Russians' espionage materials] the Great Game might play itself for aught he then cared" (*Kim* 271).

The boy's verbal response is much along the same line. He tells his master, "No . . . I am not a dog or a snake to bite when I have learned to love" (*Kim* 271). Kim's love for the Lama is so strong that, when his European ancestry threatens to separate the two, he vehemently replies: "Thou hast said there is neither black nor white. Why plague me with this talk, Holy One? Let me rub the other foot. It vexes me. I am *not* a Sahib. I am thy *chela*" (*Kim* 270, emphasis in

text). For Kim, there is no special status in being a Briton. Racial pride is simply a form of prejudice, and Kim's rank as disciple always takes precedence because it explicitly denies the superiority of white skin.

Kim's denial of his skin color serves to exemplify its insignificance to him. Like Kipling himself, Kim can never identify completely with the English. After all, he was raised as a native boy. What is important is love--regardless of race or culture. This theme of cross-cultural love dominates *Kim*. The final word of the novel is "beloved" (*Kim* 289), and the mutual love of Kim and his master enables both to reach enlightenment. The word "beloved" takes on an added significance because it also includes the other people who love Kim. All the major characters in the novel, representing the various cultures of India, are present at the time Kim and the Lama attain salvation. Each of these groups ultimately attains Nirvana because Kim is a composite of them all. The Lama recognizes from the first that liberation from "the Wheel of Things" can only be reached through Kim, an amalgamation of Western, Hindu, Moslem, and Buddhist cultures.

The Lama, with preternatural insight, recognizes as early as the trip to Umballa that salvation can only come through Kim because he is "not altogether of this world" (*Kim* 46). Kim represents all people because all of humankind is symbolically contained within him. Before he even knows that Kim perfectly integrates all the cultures of India, Teshoo Lama instinctively latches onto his disciple

because he is the catalyst for inspiring mutual love and respect among all the peoples of India, and this love prefigures all other spiritual attainments.

Kim, a product of the tolerance and understanding of a combination of Indian and Western cultures, evidences an inner strength single-culture characters cannot match. His intimacy with all sorts of people and cultures allows him to move freely between worlds. This intimacy can even be found in his name. J. Mukherjee points out that Kim may be a diminutive of Kimball, the boy's baptismal name, but it is "also one of the thousand names of Vishnu" (42). Mukherjee explains that Kipling chooses this particular name because it is as inter-cultural as the boy himself (42). Therefore, Kim is not "bound" (*Kim* 10) to Western culture like the Wonder House Sahib. Even though the curator has an intimate familiarity with Buddhist life and culture, he is finally trapped in the museum, imprisoned in the Western world. He cannot accompany the Lama on his quest. Kim, however, is unity in diversity, the "Little Friend of all the World," and can move out of the Englishman's world.

When his friend Mahbub Ali counsels him on his behavior in and out of school, he tells Kim it "'behoves thee to remember . . . Among Sahibs, never forgetting thou art a Sahib; among the folk of Hind, always remembering thou art---' he paused, with a puzzled smile" (*Kim* 143). Said focuses on the first part of his quotation. By ignoring that Mahbub places a condition on Kim's Sahib-dom, he

can state that "Mahbub Ali tells Kim that he must never forget that he is a sahib" (Introduction 35). However, this is not what the text says at all. Mahbub stresses Kim's duality; his white blood is not superior to the "folk of Hind;" white and Indian are equal. Although Said firmly places Kim in the position of a white man, Mahbub, recognizing that Kim is more than an Englishman, cannot force him into any such category. Even Kim cannot classify himself because he is equally at home anywhere. As he says, all the folk of India are his people. His response to Mahbub's confusion is "[w]hat am I? Mussalman, Hindu, Jain, or Buddhist? That is a hard nut" (*Kim* 143). Far from being detrimental, the inability to be placed in a classification proves to be extremely liberating. Kim is able to take the best of every culture and religion to become a stronger more-fulfilled person.

After he begins his Western education at the *madrissah*, Kim begins to harness the strengths which each of his cultures gives him. He exercises his mind by switching languages depending upon the circumstances. With each switch, he not only changes languages but also cultures. Lurgan Sahib attempts to spook Kim by playing a phonograph while the boy sleeps. It does not take Kim very long to become deeply disturbed by the noises. As he tries to come to terms with the situation, Kim continues to substitute Hindi for English, and vice versa, until he can decide what to do with the talking box:

. . . thinking, as usual, in Hindi . . . 'I am . . . a student of Nucklao. Yess' (here he turned to English), 'a boy of St

Xavier's. Damn Mr Lurgan's eyes!--It is some sort of machinery like a sewing-machine. Oh, it is a *great* cheek of him--we are not frightened that way at Lucknow--No!' Then in Hindi: 'But what does *he* gain? . . . The trumpet-box was pouring out a string of the most elaborate abuse that even Kim had ever heard . . . that for a moment lifted the short hairs of his neck. When the vile thing drew breath, Kim was reassured by the soft, sewing-machine-like whirr . . . 'Chûp!' (be still) he cried . . . 'Chûp--or I break you head.' . . . If there were a devil inside, now was its time for--he sniffed--thus did the sewing-machines of the bazar smell. He would clean that *shaitan*. (*Kim* 150-51)

When confronted with the unfamiliar and disconcerting, Kim employs both his native language, Hindi, and the language of his school, English. When he makes the switch, the change is complete. Even as far as the name of the city is concerned, Kim uses the Hindi form of the place, Nucklao, when thinking in Hindi, and the English form, Lucknow, when thinking in English. Although he is never able to figure out what the box is, the two cultures, playing off one another in his mind, enable him to decide a course of action.

While this scene may appear humorous when taken out of context, the purpose of the test is to determine whether Kim's English training at St. Xavier's has dampened the boy's Hindu instincts. Since Kim recognizes the evil and seeks to silence it, the incident demonstrates that he can follow his conscience in spite of

the European hierarchical system in which Lurgan places him. Lurgan Sahib is deeply impressed with the boy. He explains that, though the phonograph is an extremely expensive instrument, "it was cheap at the price" (*Kim* 151). The older man realizes the value of Kim's dual culture and lauds him for maintaining a double world-view.

While Kim's Hindu perspective earns him Lurgan's respect, the multiple nature of Kim's personal culture strengthens him so much that it eventually saves him from insanity. When Lurgan Sahib again tests the boy's mental strength, the only thing that saves him is the ability to switch the framework of his mind. Lurgan Sahib, knowing that Kim's primary culture is Hindi, attempts to break the boy's mind through a form of hypnosis designed to attack the deep-structure of that language. Kim extricates himself by switching cultures and languages:

So far Kim had been thinking in Hindi, but a tremor came on him, and with an effort like that of a swimmer before sharks, who hurls himself half out of the water, his mind leaped up from a darkness that was swallowing it and took refuge in--the multiplication-table in English! . . . The jar had been smashed--yess, smashed--not the native word, he would not think of that--but smashed--into fifty pieces, and twice three was six, and thrice three was nine, and four times three was twelve. He clung desperately to the repetition. (*Kim* 154)

While the previous trial by fire tested the power of Kim's Hindu nature, this experiment seeks to prove the boy's ability to use the English framework he learned at the *madrissah*. This terrifying experience stresses the importance of Kim's intermingled cultures. Without several ways of looking at the world, Kim's mind would not have been able to handle the extraordinary stress of the situation. By combining the strengths of many world-views, Kim negates the weaknesses of any given one.

Kipling's vision of amalgamating cultures stems from his desire to create a dialogue between differing world-views, thus undermining the provincialism and cultural isolation of both Britons and Indians. However, the author does not wish peoples to deny or subvert their own cultures, which is the reason for his often preferential treatment of Indian culture and religion. He seeks to unify the world in its diversity as he does in Kim and Purun Dass so that people of vastly divergent backgrounds can meet each other with respect. This intention is the reason why *Kim* ends with "beloved" (289). Kipling sees the melding of cultures as the only way to strengthen the individual. Only through contact with the other can an individual's, or a culture's, consciousness expand. Kipling asks his readers to empathize with, to read through native eyes, the differences they encounter in his fiction.

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